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# SHOCK CINEMA

Number 44

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## STUART WHITMAN

CIMARRON STRIP, THE MARK, THE COMANCHEROS

## SHIRLEY KNIGHT

THE RAIN PEOPLE, PETULIA, SWEET BIRD OF YOUTH

## BARBARA BOUCHET

CASINO ROYALE (1967), SWEET CHARITY, CALIBER 9

## JON POLITO

MILLER'S CROSSING, BLANKMAN, THE FRESHMAN



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Welcome to another serving of SHOCK CINEMA, and thanks for supporting the magazine with your hard-earned cash. I hope you dig this new issue, and we're already busy lining up interviews and films for the fall edition—but I'm also planning to sneak in a few days off, so I can try to empty my overloaded DVR, dig into a pile of books that've been collecting dust for too long, and maybe even fire up the PS3. I do have bad news for Canadian subscribers though. Although we've been able to keep our printing and paper costs consistent over the past decade, the one item that continues to soar is postage. Unfortunately, the cost of sending issues to Canada skyrocketed this year—postage for a single magazine jumped by almost a dollar, to \$3.45—which has forced us to raise our price for a four-issue Canadian subscription to \$24.

By now, everyone has chimed in their thoughts about the April 4th passing of Roger Ebert. Like so many others, I was a huge fan of his film criticism, as well as the important fact that he was never shy about making his political leanings and personal feelings known within his writing. I was in the midst of reading his autobiography when I heard the news about his death, and it brought back fond memories of my only encounter with Roger Ebert, back in 1980, when I was attending Syracuse University. The university's film department wanted to invite him to campus for a couple days, to screen some films of his choice and speak to students afterward. Unfortunately, they didn't have enough money for his visit, so they approached me. At the time, I was running University Union Cinemas, one of the largest campus film series in the Northeast, and we had cash to spare if it was for a good cause. So I basically agreed to be the money man—paying for the film rentals (which included two of his Russ Meyer scripting efforts, *BEYOND THE VALLEY OF THE DOLLS* and *BENEATH THE VALLEY OF THE ULTRA-VIOLENCE*) and cutting Roger Ebert's appearance check—with the film department taking care of the hobnobbing portions of his Central New York sojourn. My biggest responsibility was actually delivering Ebert's payment, and I arrived at the end of his packed screening of (the still incredible) *BVD*. When it was over, the audience exited as one large mass, with Ebert—only 38-years-old at the time—es its nucleus. The crowd was glued to every word he said, and I specifically noticed that Roger had a pretty young college girl hanging on each arm. My first thought: this short, chubby film critic was definitely getting laid tonight, so maybe there were some unexpected benefits to this particular career choice. I then approached this phalanx of fans and caught the attention of the film department prof I had worked with on Ebert's appearance, who said to me, "Roger, I want you to meet Steve Puchalski. He helped set up your trip here..." Ebert gave me a cursory nod, then went back to chatting up his co-ed admirers. "...He also has your check," to which Roger abruptly spun around, smiled widely, warmly shook my hand, and said, "It's a pleasure to meet you, Steve." I only spoke for a few moments, but his abrupt shift in attitude made me realize that even a Pulitzer Prize winning writer has to kiss a little ass in order to get his paycheck.

Unfortunately, I'm also really lucky depressed at this moment. Over the years, I've lost some great friends—Tavis Riker, Mary Karam, Barry Long—and getting that phone call or email with the news is always a kick to the solar plexus. But you grieve with others, and there are ways to find the tiniest bit of closure... But what happens when, while perusing the internet, you find a nine-month-old newspaper article about the homeless, and realize that one of the people mentioned in it is an old friend from Upstate New York? Someone I once hung out with, drank with and collaborated with on my earliest zines. I've had no contact with him in over fifteen years, and heard he'd been homeless, on and off, but this reporter's all-too-vivid details hammered home the grim reality of his situation. In addition to living outdoors, in the frigid Syracuse snow belt (in what was referred to as an immense "nest" of garbage), the poor guy—only a year younger than myself—also suffered from a recent stroke, losing the use of his right arm (the hand he used to draw with) and leaving his speech slurred. It was a sobering image, and I'm still pissed at the article's several dozen anonymous comments, declaring that the homeless deserved their fate and that offering them any sort of help was like "feeding stray dogs." Since the article was dated September 2012, I wonder if my old friend even survived this last winter? And if he didn't, would anyone even know?... Frankly, I take some exceedingly shitty turns sometimes, so make the most of it while you can... On that cheery note, enjoy. 5/1/2013

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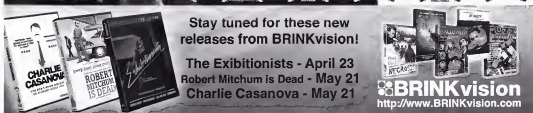
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Cover photos (clockwise from top): Stuart Whitman in *THOSE MAGNIFICENT MEN IN THEIR FLYING CHIMES*; Shirley Knight in *PETULIA*; Barbara Bouchet in *CALIBER 9*.



# "QUEEN OF GIALLO!": An Interview with International Actress BARBARA BOUCHET

By ANTHONY PETKOVICH

When I initially approached Barbara Bouchet at a Burbank autograph convention about doing a SHOCK CINEMA interview, the Italy-based actress countered my proposition with her own specific proposal. In her unique Italian-German accent, Bouchet said that she'd soon be visiting her home-away-from-home in the San Francisco Bay Area (some 400 miles away from lovely Boylston), and would I mind doing the interview via Skype? I responded as any true Bouchet aficionado would: "Yes, I would mind."

Well, in gentler terms than that. I, nonetheless, made it clear that I'd prefer speaking with her in-person. I wanted to get the lowdown on the handful of entertaining, now classic, Italian horror/slasher films, a.k.a. "giallo" movies, Bouchet did in the early '70s. And... well... it just wouldn't be the same doing it by computer. Bouchet was flattered and, thankfully, agreed to meet in-person.

A week later, I drove the majority of the long stretch from LA to San Francisco via Highway 5 and met the actress at "The Depot," a bookstore-café in the center of Mill Valley (an upscale town approximately 15 miles north of the Golden Gate Bridge). It was a slightly overcast July day as Barbara and I chatted in the indoor section of the joint. Many zombie-like customers—old and young... some walking... others seated—were so obsessively glued to their iPhones that they totally missed hearing the international actress, quite openly, relating wild stories about her life, as well as fun tales connected to her American and Euro films.

While she did appear in a number of interesting American action films and television shows during the '60s, Bouchet is still best known for starring in several Italian giallo titles: namely, *THE MAN WITH THE ICY EYES*, *BLACK BELLY OF THE TARANTULA* (both 1971), *AMUCK!*, *THE FRENCH SEX MURDERS*, *THE RED QUEEN KILLS SEVEN TIMES*, and *DON'T TORTURE A DUCKLING* (all 1972).

Historically, giallo movies were the spawn of Italian crime-mystery novels dating as far back as the 1920s. The Italian word "giallo" means "yellow" and refers to the yellow-covered paperbacks containing these thrillers. As the decades rolled on, the stories became progressively more violent and lurid. And in terms of the medium, making the transition from print to celluloid, Italian horror maestro Mario Bava was highly influential in laying the groundwork. Inevitably influenced by Alfred Hitchcock's *PSYCHO*, Bava—and, consequently, almost all subsequent giallo filmmakers—heaped his giallo prototype, *BLOOD AND BLACK LACE*, with such potent imagery as a masked/faceless maniac with black-gloved hands, the grisly murders of attractive young females, risqué subject matter like sex and drugs, as well as darker psychological themes like paranoia and insanity. Giallo cinema, in fact, became so popular during the '70s, that many bean-counting Euro producers became just as fixated with having bottles of J&B Scotch whisky highly visible on the screen as

their fictitious killers were obsessed with a rapidly growing inventory of female cadavers.

Blatant booze adverts aside, however, the distinctive Euro-slasher film movement really peaked in the early '70s, precisely the time when Bouchet began working her movie magic abroad. Taking into account her intense, classic beauty (blonde hair, blue eyes, curvaceous figure);



Born Barbara Gutscher in Sudetenland (now the Czech Republic) in 1943, Bouchet immigrated with her family to the US after World War II but ultimately—due to hard-pressed yet rather intriguing circumstances after establishing herself as an American starlet—returned to Europe in 1970 at age 27 to start a new career in foreign films. The move obviously worked out for the better, taking into account all of the great horror and crime movies, as well as the slew of entertaining sex farces (such as 1976's popular *SEX WITH A SMILE*), which she had a hand in. And being fluent in Italian and German certainly didn't hurt Bouchet's popularity amongst foreign movie producers, either.

Some Euro-horror fans, of course, might passionately feel that the contrastingly stunning Edwige Fenech (Italy's brunette counterpart to Bouchet during the '70s) is the Queen of giallo movies—not Bouchet. Well... Eddy can ring us up anytime and spill her side of the story. But until that time?—take it away, Bouchet!...

**SHOCK CINEMA:** One of the better giallos you did in the '70s was *AMUCK!*; a suspenseful, Hitchcockian film rather atypical of the genre in that its focus wasn't specifically on some faceless serial killer liquidating sexy young babes. Barbara Bouchet: We actually filmed *AMUCK!* in the Philippines. Rosalba Neri co-starred with me. She now lives in a big castle in Rome after having married a rich businessman. Actually, we ran into each other when I got married, because I had my wedding at her castle. [laughs] And after Rosalba got married, she never wanted to act again. She's into her horses, her stables, and living in her castle.

**SC:** Sounds quite nice, actually. A few years after *AMUCK!* you starred in the Euro-crime title *DEATH RAGE* with Yul Brynner. Bouchet: I remember I was pregnant at the time with one of my sons. I also remember that I didn't get along with Yul Brynner at all. He did something in front of me which totally turned me off.

**SC:** What was that?

Bouchet: He was in his dressing room going over lines, and he took off his stinky socks and threw them at the wardrobe lady's face. "Wash them," he told her. I didn't like that at all. So when I found out that he was superstitious with regard to carnations, I anonymously sent a big bouquet of carnations to his dressing room. [laughs]

**SC:** [jokingly] Man, you're mean. Bouchet: [laughs]

**SC:** And what about your most infamous spaghetti-crime movie, *CRY OF A PROSTITUTE*? Bouchet: Recently I thought to myself, "Maybe I should look at this one." So I watched it and thought, "I have a strange brain; because I block out certain things from my mind."

impressive acting prowess; comparatively prolific appearances in foreign thrillers, and bold approach to some joltingly brutal scenes of violence strangely combined with eroticism, Bouchet could easily be considered the Queen of Giallo.

During this time, the actress also appeared in a host of memorable Euro-crime films, most notably director Fernando di Leo's classic 1972 "polizieschi," *CALIBER 9*. Some other fun Bouchet spaghetti-crime flicks include *RICCO* (1973), *DEATH RAGE* (1976), *BLOOD AND DIAMONDS* (1978), and *CRY OF A PROSTITUTE* (1974), the latter featuring Bouchet, once again, in a number of outrageous sado-sex interludes, this time with an over-the-top Henry Silva; scenes which would never pass muster in these "politically correct" (the new synonym for "dull") cinematic times.

Bouchet is also one of the few actresses to play Money Penny in a James Bond film. Her rendition of the iconic secret agent's lovable secretary is particularly standout because it's not only both refreshingly youthful and comedic but appears in the psychedelic, big-budgeted, hard-not-to-enjoy, because-it's-all-over-the-place-and-ch-so-wonderfully-campy Bond spoof *CASINO ROYALE* (1967).

**SC: Like CRY OF A PROSTITUTE?**  
Bouchet: Well, I realized I had no previous memory of the film because it was so violent. Henry Silva even sticks his face into the carcass of a pig.

**SC: He does far more than that to you in the movie.**  
Bouchet: [laughs] Obviously it shocked me, and my brain must have said, "Out! We don't keep that one in here."

**SC: You're very good at doing 'distraught' to the nth degree, as is quite evident in CRY OF A PROSTITUTE and BLACK BELLY OF THE TARANTULA.**

Bouchet: It just comes out of me. I never went to acting school. I just go into a scene and imagine myself in the situation. In Italy I had a hard time convincing them to put me in things other than sex comedies though. That's why I got out of the business.

When I hit 39, I told myself, "I can't continue doing these [sex forces]. I'll soon be turning 40 and going into another phase of my life. I want to do serious, meaty parts." And I kept telling the press, "Make me ugly, make me old, but give me a part that I can sink my teeth into." So, that's been a rather tough road for me to travel down.

**SC: But you've done quite a few serious roles. We'll discuss them. But let's go even further back... I have in my notes that your family actually fled Sudetenland, the future Czechoslovakia. Can you give us some insight pertaining to this notion that your family left Sudetenland under duress?**



Rosalba Neri and Barbara Bouchet in AMUCK!

Plattling... close to Regensburg in lower Bavaria. Her uncle had a farm there which had a butcher shop, a beer distillery, a hotel upstairs... everything in one. And her aunt owned a big apartment complex, so she gave our family an apartment with two rooms. It wasn't a very big apartment because the bathroom was outside. Very chic, [laughs] And my mother's uncle had field workers, so food had to be cooked everyday for these laborers. Big pots of food. And whatever was left over came down to us.

**SC: Did you have a lot of siblings?**

Bouchet: Five kids altogether. I was the first-born. And life was good, I have to say. You know what? — kids, you feed 'em, give them a bed... and they're happy! We grew up in the countryside with the cows and pigs and horses.

**SC: And your father was a photographer, right?**

Bouchet: Initially he was a cinematographer. But when he left Czechoslovakia, yes, he became a photographer. And eventually he got a better job in Munich with Viewmaster; you know, those round discs with little negatives in them. You'd put them in a machine and just go "click," and you'd have a slide show. So when my father got that job, we moved to Munich and got a much nicer apartment.

That's when I enrolled in my first ballet school. I'd seen a movie with Christine Kaufmann, called THE SILENT ANGEL, where she portrays a deaf and dumb ballet dancer. "Oh!" I said, "I want to become

a ballet dancer!" So my parents signed me up at this school in Munich. We lived there about a year.

**SC: And why did you leave Munich?**

Bouchet: A clairvoyant told my mother that one day she'd go across "the big sea." And she put that in her head — and kept it there. And after two families from our small town had moved to America — one family to California, the other to New York — they kept sending my mother letters stating how great it was in the States. And my mother finally said, "I want to go."

She wrote to the family in California, asking them to please look for a sponsor for us, otherwise

you couldn't go there. And they eventually found one: an owner of big cotton fields in Five Points, California [near Fresno]. Well, he was looking for handymen, and he got three: mom, dad, and me. So he was going to pay for our transfer to America from Munich. My father was hoping that the note from this sponsor would never arrive, but when it did, my mother begged him until he said, "Okay." So we flew to America on an airplane with propellers, landed in New York, were sent down to the New York train station with big tags on our little things saying who we were and where we were going... Then we traveled across the US by train. I was 12 and was always looking out the train window for cowboys and Indians. Didn't see any [laughs].

So we ended up in Five Points, where they gave us a little hut with three rooms out in the countryside. We kids went to school and learned English. There was also a lady who owned her own ranch nearby, she offered to pay for my ballet school, which was located in Fresno. She even took me there once a week. So once we paid off our debt — because you had to pay it off... whatever amount your sponsor had spent to get you to America — we were now free people. It was actually like being a slave.

A year or two after we'd bought our freedom, we moved to San Francisco. Our apartment in the Mission District... [laughs]... it was filled with cockroaches. Nice, big cockroaches. But we kids came from the country so we were used to a lot of things. And everybody collected their own cockroach and kept it in a matchbox. We'd even have cockroach races. We had fun with our cockroaches! [laughs] So today, I don't have a fear of them.

**SC: Other than the roaches, tell us about life in the Mission District.**

Bouchet: It was mainly populated with Mexicans back then. Still is, I believe. Then again, I'd been going to school with Mexicans in Fresno County, so to me it wasn't anything strange. But to them, I was strange because among all of these dark-skinned, dark-haired kids was this tall girl with long blonde hair, bangs, and big blue eyes. They didn't like that. You gotta remember, kids can be cruel. It doesn't matter what race you are. Just being somewhat different can make you an outsider. So they used to throw gum into my hair, and I'd have to cut it because you can't get gum out of hair.

And one day a Mexican girl in my class said to me, "Are you calling me out?" I didn't even know what she was saying. And everybody said, "Say yes! Say yes!" Well, after school I found out what she meant. She called me out to a fight. And she had a ring on her finger with an arrow on it... I still have a scar from the cut that arrow made... Anyhow, after that incident, she got thrown out of school — and I left the school because I told my father, "Dad, I'm not going back there. They can't stand me. I stick out like a sore thumb."

We eventually moved out to the Sunset District, which is where I went to high school. By then, Dad got a job photographing weddings, Communion and baby showers. And when he'd photograph a wedding, it was heyday at our home. He'd go to the weddings and take his camera bags. But he'd always take extra bags, in which he'd put goodies from the weddings. [laughs] And when he came back home, he'd say to us kids, "Look what I got!" And then he started taking a lot of pictures of me. Around that time, he'd taken a



Yul Brynner and Bouchet in DEATH RAGE

Bouchet: Well, at that particular time, Sudetenland was part of Germany. But, yes, it eventually became Czechoslovakia. They mainly spoke German there. My father is from Sudetenland, and my mother is German. And after I was born we actually fled from the Russians.

"Mr. Gutschek," they said to my father, "take your hat and go," because my father's side of the family owned a cinema called Adria Kino. The word "kino" in German means "cinema." It's still there: Adria Kino. So my mother got on a train with a bunch of soldiers and took me with her to Germany, where her aunt and uncle lived. We settled in a small little town in Moos, which is near



color picture of me wearing a white blouse, a red velvet vest, and a light-blue patterned dirndl skirt; you know, the kind of clothes young serving girls wear in German beer halls. And after he'd taken that picture, I gave it to a boy whom I liked.

There used to be a TV show in the Bay Area called THE AMERICAN DANCE PARTY, which I



### Barbara Bouchet in BLACK BELLY OF THE TARANTULA

used to watch all of the time. Kids would go there and dance to the music. And a producer from the show called me up one day and said, "Congratulations. You won the Gidget Contest." I said, "What do you mean?" "Well, didn't you submit your picture to the contest?" Apparently somebody did. Not me, though. As it turned out, it was the boy to whom I gave the picture. [laughs] He submitted it.

GIDGET was a popular movie with Sandra Dee and Jimmy Darren, and I don't look anything like Sandra Dee, who was a tiny little thing with short blonde hair. I said, "But I don't look like her." And the producer who called me up, he just said, "It doesn't matter. You won." It was my father's color picture that won, actually. The other contestants probably sent in black-and-white photos of themselves. But mine was a real color photograph by a real photographer. So my prize was a dinner with Jimmy Darren and a screen test in Hollywood, which was the first time that the notion of acting even entered my head. Anyhow, while I got the dinner with Jimmy Darren, the screen test was never discussed. But I put a bug in my ear.

Consequently, while I was here in San Francisco, I signed up with an agency to learn how to model. My agent around this time was Jimmy Grimmer, and he was the one who changed my name. My real name is Barbel Goutscherols. Then it became Goutscher. Jimmy said, "Where are you gonna go with that name?" And since he loved French names, he said, "Barbel will become Barbara. And Barbara Goutscher... Barbara Gouché... Barbara Bouché... Barbara Bouché! Yeah. That's fine." And that was it. The thing is, everyone thinks that I'm French. [laughs] Well, it was actually a time when they all changed their names. Tab Hunter... Rick Hudson... Back then, you couldn't possibly have a name like Barbara Goutscher. Today they keep them, though. Actors and actresses have Slavic names and various other ethnic names.

And I guess it was during the summer holiday

that one of the models who worked with my father, Dolores Erickson, moved down to LA, and I asked her if I could stay with her. And she said yes. Now, around this time, things were not going so hot between my parents. The minute my mother got to California, she wanted to go back home because it was not what she expected. She was hoping for a better life and ended up having to work in cotton fields. Very unhappy. And things weren't working out between my parents.

#### SC: Tensions?

Bouchet: Yeah. So at a certain point I said, "I want to go down to LA and stay with Doris," which is what I did. But then I decided that I didn't want to come home anymore. I was 15 and my mother said, "Yeah. Fine." But my poor father... I realized now what he went through. When one of my sons turned 15, I looked at him and thought, "If my son would now tell me, 'Mom, I'm going to New York or LA and staying there, I'd go out of my mind.' He would have been just a baby, totally inexperienced about the world."

And I realized how much my father suffered. It was my father who suffered, not my mother. And I later asked her, "Mom, why did you tell me, 'Go'?" And she said, "Because your father was in love with you. And I could not accept that. I would not stand for it. It was only you, you, you. And he was always photographing you, even nude, by the lakes and all of that." But I didn't think anything of it. I never had a problem with it.

#### SC: Which explains why nudity wasn't an issue for you in many of your Italian movies.

Bouchet: No. Nudity has never been a problem with me. Nor was it a problem at home. But my mother felt that my father was into me and ignored her second daughter and all of that. And she wanted me out of there.

So, when I went down to LA and said, "I'm not coming home anymore," my father came down to take me home. I said, "No!" and ran out of the apartment. I remember running down to a phone booth to call mom, and dad broke that phone booth and dragged me back to my apartment by the hair. And he beat me to a pulp. "Even if you kill me," I told him, "I'm not going home!" I was rebellious. And I don't go home. What I did was sign up at The Hollywood Professional School in LA, which gave me the possibility to go out on interviews for acting roles. Ryan O'Neal and Al McGraw were in my class. We didn't learn much, but I did my school duties, and I needed to go out on an appointment for an acting job, they'd let me.

#### SC: How did you support yourself?

Bouchet: I was selling shoes, delivering Chicken Delight to different homes... I just made my own living and never looked back. There was no way to look back, anyway. At home, nobody was going to give me a cent, what with four kids there. I remember my father said that I didn't exist for him anymore. I cried when he told me that. [pauses] But... I had my mind set. I was sure of myself and that I didn't need anybody. I worked. I ate. I stayed at my girlfriend Dolores' house. It was as simple as that.

One day I did go back home to visit, though, and I saw that my parents were really in a bad rut. My dad kept saying to my mom that he was going

to leave her. And she'd become desperate. So one day while I was at home, I faced them and said, "Dad, either you get out of here forever, or you stop torturing mother about leaving and not leaving and this and that." Poor guy. Today, in retrospect, I realize that my father didn't have it easy. It was hard on him being in a foreign country, leaving his homeland, having all of these kids. Then the wife becomes unhappy, the daughter leaves... I mean, the whole world was falling apart around him. But I only realize all of this now in retrospect.

I remember one time he came after me, and I jumped off the balcony — and that was the end of my dancing career. I thought I was going to hit the grass when I jumped, but I hit the concrete instead and broke both of my feet and a leg. My father was standing at the balcony, looking down, laughing, and saying, "If only Hollywood could see their star now!" It was only one story down, but smashing upon concrete from even a one-floor drop was still pretty bad. My mother said, "Please don't say what happened. Just say that you did it on your own without your father chasing you." And I never said what really happened.

#### SC: So when did you start actually getting movie parts?

Bouchet: From my late-teens to 20, I got a lot of little walk-on roles in movies with big-name stars. BEDTIME STORY (1964), with Marlon Brando and David Niven. WHAT A WAY TO GO! (1964), with Robert Mitchum and Shirley MacLaine. A GLOBAL AFFAIR (1964) with Bob Hope. SEX AND THE SINGLE GIRL with Tony Curtis. But I



### With Hugh O'Brian in IN HARM'S WAY

was working. And my parts kept getting a little bit bigger each time. But when I did Otto Preminger's IN HARM'S WAY (1965), that was a turning point in my career.

#### SC: Tell us about your Preminger experiences.

Bouchet: Well, he was a tyrant. I remember there was a screen test... [laughs] Paula Prentiss was being screen tested, and I was sitting there watching it, and Otto was screaming his head off at her. Afterwards I went into the dressing room and there was Paula Prentiss. I looked in the mirror at her and asked, "Are you okay?" She said, "Yeah. But I need that." I'll never forget that. I ran into Paula two

months ago... didn't recognize her... and I mentioned it to her, and she said, "Yeah, that must have been when I was drinking."

So when it was my turn for a screen test with Preminger, I said to him in German, "If you scream at me, I won't be able to do anything." And he responded in German, "Well, you saw what I don't like." But I saw so many things. Anyhow, in the end I just did my thing. That's it. He wasn't a tyrant with me because I spoke his language. And he signed me to a seven-year contract with Paramount — Jill Haworth and Paula Prentiss, as well.

Regarding my role for IN HARM'S WAY, I told Otto that I didn't know how to swim. And he said that I had to learn to swim if I was going to even have the possibility of being considered for this particular part. So I went to learn to swim. Still can't swim, though. Couldn't swim to save my life. [laughs]

**SC: But you didn't have to go that far into the water for your IN HARM'S WAY beach scene.** Bouchet: No. But there was the problem of me lying on the rock when the water came over me, because if I fell in, I wouldn't know how to swim. But I did learn to swim a little bit.

I remember they wrote something in the papers about me... It was either Hedda Hopper or Louella Parsons... I don't remember which one.



David Niven and Barbara Bouchet in CASINO ROYALE

clubs. And you could not leave Los Angeles. At the time, producers would put actors under contract, pay them a fee, and then they'd sometimes loan them out to other studios for a bigger fee.

Well, after IN HARM'S WAY, Otto did a film with Tom Tryon — and there was no part in it for me. So at a certain point he said to me [with heavy Austrian accent], "You know, [legendary producer/agent] Charlie Feldman came to me, and he wanted you for a film. But I don't need the money. So I say, 'No.' And I thought, 'Oh shit. That means he's never going to loan me out to anybody else. I'm stuck here, and God knows when he's going to do another film where there's a part for me.'"

So one day I said to him, "Otto, we're on the second year of my contract, and you're not using me. You said that you're not handing me over to anybody else to work. My career is going to go down the drain if I don't work. Can I get out of my contract?" And, lo and behold, because I speak German, he said, "Yes." Then he said [in Austrian accent], "Oh, remember, Charlie Feldman like you." But I didn't want to deal with Charlie Feldman because he had a reputation of being a lady's man. Anyway, Otto let me go, and then I did SWEET CHARITY for Bob Fosse.

#### SC: What was Fosse like?

Bouchet: Fosse? [laughs] With him I was just worried that he didn't like me. He never said anything to me. He just let me do my scenes. But at a certain point I said, "Mr. Fosse, don't you like me?" "Why do you say that?" he asked. "Because you never give me any input, or correct me, or say, 'That's good.' The reason I don't say anything about your acting," he said, "is because it is good." And I said, "Well, then would you please say, 'That's good?' I need some kind of feedback." [laughs] That's all. He was very quiet. Yet after SWEET CHARITY, I was out of work.

But this one guy who was a producer — a short, ugly creature with big ears and bug eyes — he approached me about doing a film in Paris. I figured, "Well, I gotta work; so I told him, 'Okay. Let's go.' So we went to Paris. And I remember the first night there, he took me to the Eiffel Tower and

said, "Okay, tomorrow you go shopping. You buy some clothes, a fur coat, some jewelry." And I said, "Well, isn't the wardrobe lady supposed to do that?" And he said, "No, no — for you." I said, "Yeah?" And what's the catch?" "Well, we're going to the Cannes Film Festival, and I reserved a suite for us." I said, "No. Let's do it this way: I don't go shopping, and you cancel the suite." We brokeered back and forth, and in the end he said, "Okay, and I didn't go shopping."

So we go to Cannes, arrive at the hotel, and he had not cancelled the suite, because they ushered us into a suite with a living room and large bedroom.

#### SC: So what did you do?

Bouchet: I went into the bedroom, got a pillow and a blanket, threw them on the couch in the living room, said, "You gotta keep your promise; we went back into the bedroom, and locked the door. [laughs] And one time when we were in the lobby, a man came up and asked me, 'Are you Barbara Bouchet?' I said, 'Yeah.' 'My name is Carlo Ponti,' he said. I didn't even know who the hell he was. My little guy was all excited. And Ponti said, 'I would like to have a meeting with you in Cap Ferrat tomorrow.' After Ponti left, the little guy said, 'He's Sophia Loren's husband! He's a big producer! Now remember, you belong to me.' 'Yeah, yeah,' I said, 'Don't worry about it.'"

So I went to Cap Ferrat, figuring that Sophia Loren would be there. I knew who she was. At that time she was also the president of the festival. But she wasn't at Cap Ferrat. And, at a certain point, Carlo Ponti asked me, "What is your body like?" and I said, "It's fine, thank you." [laughs] He didn't know what to say to that. He eventually said [in thick Italian accent], "I suppose the director will decide." "Yeah," I said. "Who is the director?" And he said, "I want you to go to London to visit this director for a film I am producing. His name is Michelangelo Antonioni." I'd never heard of him. And it was for a movie called BLOW UP.

The next day I was at the airport, and a man comes up to me and asks, "You're Barbara Bouchet, aren't you?" I thought, "God damn, I'm famous!" [laughs] But I didn't know that I was famous. I mean, nobody would walk up to me in America and say, "You're Barbara Bouchet, aren't you?" Nobody. I had done two films worth naming — IN HARM'S WAY and SWEET CHARITY — but I was no star. So I thought it was weird that these people were coming up to me. And the fellow said, "Well, my name's Charlie Feldman." "Oh, hello." "Are you still under contract to Otto?" "No." "Where are you going?" "London." "Me, too!" And then he said, "Here, let me show you something." And he proceeded to show me page after page of a James Bond project called CASINO ROYALE. I said, "Well, right now I'm going to see this Italian guy for a film. I don't know what it's all about or anything." And Feldman said, "Well, here's my number. If it doesn't work out, give me a call." Well, it didn't work out.

#### SC: What happened?

Bouchet: When I went to meet Antonioni at the designated hotel in London, I remember it was raining, and we were sitting in the bay window — him there, me here — and I said, "Well, Mr. Antonioni, what's this film all about? What's my part in it?" And he said [in heavy Italian accent], "I am...



With Ricardo Montalban in SWEET CHARITY

Well, Otto read it and said to me, "You know, they say that you and I have a thing going together. So, why don't we?" And I said, "No. Just hang onto what they wrote — but forget about getting together." [laughs]

At Paramount, I had to report every week to the studio, and I remember Otto's desk was down at the other end of his office, which was so big. And my shoes wobbled as I walked all the way down to his desk because he scared the hell out of me. But he was always good to me. Jill Haworth would come up to his office and say, "Why does he always say to me, 'Why can't you be like Barbara?'... Why can't you be like Barbara?"

But Otto had his rules. The hair had to be parted in the middle, not on the side. You could only wear certain types of clothes. You couldn't go to certain restaurants. You couldn't go to night-



very tired. I don't feel like talking about it now." I said, "Oh, that's interesting. I fly from Nice to London to meet with you, and you don't want to talk about it." And I knew exactly what he wanted, so I said, "Goodbye," walked out, went to the lobby, found a phone, pulled out Charlie Feldman's card, and called him. "Hello, Mr. Feldman? Barbara Bouchet. I'm here in London, and I'm available for your movie." "Cool," he said. "You got the part."

So then I called my agent, Paul Kohner, and said, "I'm in London. Charlie Feldman has just offered me the part of Miss Monypenny in CASINO ROYALE." Paul said, "Yeah, you and 3,000 other girls." "What do you mean?" "He's testing every woman in town and out of town for the part. Everyone! All of 'em. So don't count on it." "But" I said, "I'm not testing. I got it." "Yeah, sure." So I called the New York office, explained the situation to them, and said, "You know, Paul is saying you this end you that. But I got the part. So will you handle it?" And they did. Another seven-year contract, this time with United Artists.

**SC: Whatever happened to the little fellow back in Nice?**

Bouchet: I never went back, instead, I stayed in London. All of my clothes were in Paris. He kept them. I said, "Yeah, you can keep them, if you want, you can even wear 'em." [laughs] So I stayed in London and started living and working there.

**SC: And how long were you involved with the CASINO ROYALE project?**

Bouchet: The filming in London lasted an entire year and a half.

**SC: Most of your scenes are with David Niven.**

Bouchet: And to this day, David is still my favorite human being. I fell in love with that man. He was so great. So nice, sweet, and funny. I had a fabulous time with him. We just laughed all the way through the movie.

But it was a long haul. I had a boyfriend back in America named Gardner McKay who was not very happy with me being gone for a year and a half. So I lost him on the way. But work had to come first at that time.

**SC: CASINO ROYALE had at least five directors. Which one directed you?**

Bouchet: Val Guest. And I mostly worked with David Niven, Terence Cooper and Woody Allen. We filmed at Pinewood. They built so many sets... and tore a lot of them down... never even used them. I mean, they really threw money around like it was nobody's business. But [script-wise] they were winging it. It was crazy. But it was ahead of its time in terms of that whole craziness.

I remember how I'd sit in my trailer waiting for scenes to arrive in a little wagon. And I'd fill up my room with these pastries and eat them. Boy, did I start ballooning. One time I bit into one of those things and ate the cap to one of my teeth. So I couldn't work until the dentist replaced it.

And being in England, I was missing the sun. One day I went out and laid in Hyde Park in my bikini and got arrested. You can't do that—at least not back then. So I finally said to David Niven [in exaggerated tragic voice], "David, I need the sun. I cannot be in this weather all of the time. It's making me very unhappy." He said, "Well, I go home every weekend to the south of France. Just get on the same plane as I do and take the same plane back home. We work together, so don't say anything. Just go." Which is what I did. And I was stupid. First I ran into Tom Jones over the weekend

and had a fling with him. Then I got myself a lot of sunshine... and came back suntanned.

**SC: Uh-oh.**

Bouchet: Uh-oh is right. [laughs]

**SC: I suppose Val Guest...**

Bouchet: ...was pissed. They had to change everything around until my skin got white again. Oh, yeah. They were not happy.



So after CASINO ROYALE, I did one more film for Charlie [Feldman] in England, which was with Richard Johnson, called DANGER ROUTE (1967). And I hooked up with Richard as a boyfriend. He was divorced from Kim Novak, and we moved in together. And then I did a play under his contract, MISTER ROBERTS, with John Kerr and Hugh O'Brian. It was here at the Circle Star Theatre... in the round. Not long after that, Charlie died, so my contract was dissolved.

**SC: And why did you decide to make the career move to Europe?**

Bouchet: Well, first I got out of LA because there was a gentleman who got hooked on me. He was quite old, and at the time I really didn't have any money. So he invited me to fancy restaurants and all of that—and I went. But then he started bringing me boxes of emerald necklaces and earrings and the rest. "This is yours," he told me, "but I want you to be my woman." That didn't sit too well with me. Then he tried even more of that kind of stuff, which also didn't sit well with me. But it was all very calm-like.

It came to a head, however, when he brought me to this mega-villa in Bel Air. Big gates. They open up. The Rolls-Royce came to a stop outside the place, and I thought, "Uh-oh. Here I go. I'm gonna get into trouble." He takes me inside, and I thought he was going to try to jump my bones. But he didn't. And I couldn't help but notice that there were pictures of Bobby Evans everywhere.

**SC: Robert Evans, the movie mogul.**

Bouchet: Yeah. He lived there. He was head of Paramount at the time. And this older guy says, "This is where you'll live." "But," I said, "Bobby Evans lives here." "He'll live somewhere else," he told me. "Just say 'yes.'" He was really laying it on heavy. I must have been 23 or so, and he was in his 50's, which was old to me at that time. "I can't do it," I told him.

Then he got mad. "You know," he said, "I can ruin your career for the rest of your life. And I will." Oh, God. So I got a plane ticket, went to New York, moved in with a Japanese girlfriend who lived there doing modeling, and I went to look for work as a model. They all said, "What are you doing here? Aren't you an actress?" "Yeah," I said, "but... I'm having some difficulties." And that year in New York? It's so damn cold there in the winter, it cuts your nose off. Oh! Awful.

So one day Paul Kohner calls and says, "There's these Italians here who saw your picture in HOLLYWOOD VARIETY," because SWEET CHARITY was coming out at the time, "and they want to see you." "Well, I'm in New York," I told him. "They'll come to New York." So we met in New York at the Plaza Hotel, and they offered me a film in Rome... and that's when I went to Italy.

**SC: I'm sure many fans agree with me when I say that some of the best stuff you did was in the Italian giallo genre.**

Bouchet: And I had so much of that kind of work that my agent at the time didn't want to lose a job, so he'd say, "Well, Barbara can't do it, but I have so-and-so." All foreign girls—and blondes with blue eyes. He never lost a film because he always had someone to take my place just in case I couldn't do it. And he built an agency on that.

He also cheated us out of a lot of money. We actresses knew nothing about each other, but he told us all separately that we couldn't have bank accounts in Italy because we were foreigners. So he took all of our money and, supposedly, put it into separate accounts in Switzerland, and then every month he'd say that he'd have to go to check out my money in Switzerland, so I would give him the money to go there. And he would take the same amount of money from all of the other actresses he represented.

Now, when I met my husband, we went to Switzerland and found that all of my money was gone. The agent was gone, too. The guy was a real wheeler-dealer, just using women. A bad seed.

**SC: Sorry it worked out that way. But you also did a lot of work in the Euro-crime genre, like the classic CALIBER 9 with Mario Adorf...**

Bouchet: ...who is German. The other star in the movie, Philippe Lefay, is French. And the main actor, Gastone Moschin, is Italian. It's one of the biggest cult movies I did, and it's considered Fernando Di Leo's best movie. I did another film with him called BLOOD AND DIAMONDS which didn't do as well. But when we were making CALIBER 9, I had no idea it was going to become so famous. At the time, it was just another movie to me.

**SC: Di Leo seemed to really like filming female go-go dancers—like your character in CALIBER 9—with the camera below them and at tilted angles.**

Bouchet: That was his thing. I did that dance scene in a real nightclub, and it was closed to the press, closed to almost everybody. I wasn't supposed to say anything, either. Next thing you know, it was

out. A picture of me on that dancing cube all over the newspapers. Somebody took it and printed it.

**SC: And what was di Leo like as a director?**  
Bouchet: A very quiet, organized person. A sweet man, easy to work with. A gentle soul.

**SC: Do you still get a lot of fans coming up to you, wanting to discuss CALIBER 9?**



Gastone Moschin and Bouchet in *CALIBER 9*

Bouchet: Are you kidding? Well, let's put it this way. Young people studying cinema, they know about it. When I go to autograph signings, a precise group of fans know about that film.

**SC: And one of the more well-known giallo movies you did was Lucio Fulci's DON'T TORTURE A DUCKLING.**

Bouchet: Yes. Those two films — *CALIBER 9* and *DON'T TORTURE A DUCKLING* — are really my most famous ones.

**SC: Where was DUCKLING filmed?**

Bouchet: I was just there: a region of southern Italy called Puglia. And a month ago, I was invited to Puglia, to Monte Sant'Angelo, where they really honored me. Monte Sant'Angelo — where my scenes for the movie were made — was one of those small, little, white-[stucco], Greek-like towns way up on top of a mountain. Totally isolated. Beautiful. But at the time, I didn't see any of it because I was staying down below at a hotel in the flatlands, and they would drive me up and stick me in this apartment to film my scenes.

And when I returned after all of these years to the apartment where I did many of my scenes for *DUCKLING*, the man who owns the property — he was a very young man when we filmed the movie — showed me where we shot my scenes. He said, "You see this dresser? You told me, 'I'll give you a check for it. Just write in how much you want.'"

The film has become legendary there. And they took me to the main piazza. "Here's where you filmed this scene," they said, and "This is where you filmed that scene." Then the same fellow who owns the apartment showed me a little rubber duckling [Fulci's symbol for children murdered in the movie] and said, "I made friends with the director, Lucio Fulci, and I followed him around everywhere. So before he left after finishing the film, he gave me this duckling." That man is now my age, and he still has that duckling in his home.

**SC: I bet it would fetch a pretty penny on eBay. So what was Fulci like?**

Bouchet: Not at all like Fernando di Leo. They

were two opposites. Fulci was a little bit further out. A little crazy.

**SC: Another big star at the time was Edwige Fenech. She was your brunette counterpart in the giallo genre when it was really exploding. Actually, you're both in SEX WITH A SMILE...**

Bouchet: Yes, but in different stories. Edwige and I are considered something like the Gina Lollobrigida and Sophia Loren of Italy. Yes, we're opposites from the same period. Back then, a producer would say, "Give me Barbara or give me Edwige. Either one is fine," because we were both marketable. They could sell our movies to foreign countries, so it didn't matter whether they used her the brunette, or me the blonde. And at that time, she had a companion who produced all of her films: Luciano Martino.

**SC: Related no doubt to director Sergio Martino.**

Bouchet: Yes. Luciano is Sergio's brother. Luciano also did a lot of my films. But Edwige?.. She's a different creature, let's put it that way. She's not very open, not friendly, and she was never

able to accept me. I don't know why, because there was enough work out there for all of us.

**SC: Was it a form of professional jealousy?**

Bouchet: She's always been that way. And I can honestly say that I've never been with her because I had so much work that I wasn't even looking at what she was doing. I'd just keep working. But I really realized that she had a problem with me when she went into production work. She hooked up with the filthy rich guy who's Chairman of Ferrari, Luca Cordero di Montezemolo. When he left her [pauses]... she made a deal with him that she wouldn't talk in any way, shape, or form about anything pertaining to their relationship. But she wanted to produce. So he helped her produce a TV show, and the first one she did was really good. Her ex-boyfriend Luciano Martino also helped her.

So after the show aired, I called Edwige and said, "Congratulations! I couldn't possibly do production work. I just don't have the knack for it." Then I said, "Well, if you're going to produce more shows, think of how great it would be, the two of us working together: you produce and I act." But she didn't want to have anything to do with that idea. Luciano, who's been going with my girlfriend for nine years now, would tell me, "God, she couldn't stand you."

The only film we did together aside from *SEX WITH A SMILE* was a comedy [*LA MOGLIE IN VACANZA... L'AMANTE IN CITTA'* (1980)]. And before we started filming that movie, Edwige said to the makeup artist, "I want to get second call for makeup." In other words, the makeup person would first do my makeup, then do hers. But what it really meant was that Edwige would get more time to sleep. And the makeup artist said, "Why

don't you change off every once in a while?" No way. "I want second call," she said, "and that's it!"

I remember when we were making [*LA MOGLIE IN VACANZA*], she walked by the dining room where I was sitting by myself in a corner eating my dinner. She was in her fur coat, walked by and said, "Ciao! We're going out for dinner." And I said to myself, "Well, if it was me, I would've said, 'Hi, Edwige. You're sitting here by yourself. Why don't you come and have dinner with us?' No. She's just the opposite. She can't stand me. But you know what, I'm a happy camper, and she's a very unhappy camper. She's also very lonely."

**SC: How so?**

Bouchet: Edwige has a son — by a director whom she never mentions — who was raised by her parents. Then she became involved with Luciano Martino, who would never marry her. And after that, when she got together with Luca di Montezemolo, she was really highfalutin. But he also wouldn't marry her, and he eventually left her in fact, a year after he left Edwige. Luca married a young blonde who was closer to his social status. He wasn't able to marry Edwige because she... There was just a lot of baggage. And the public wouldn't accept him if he married her because he was running for public office. As I say, she's an unhappy camper.

**SC: Tell us about working on Martin Scorsese's GANGS OF NEW YORK (2002).**

Bouchet: By the time I did *GANGS OF NEW YORK*, I'd pulled myself out of the movies and decided to open a gym and go into the health business. I also went to the local TV company and asked, "Are you interested in doing a show on health and beauty?" which they didn't have. And they were very interested. So, I did that show for two years. It was called *BODY BODY*, and it was



Barbara Bouchet and Michael C. Reilly in *GANGS OF NEW YORK*

an hour show — filmed in Italy and aired every Saturday, with reruns on Sundays — and segments would focus on bodybuilding, freestyle exercise... I would have everything choreographed for each show. I also did interviews with famous people like Christian Bernard... ectom, actresses who would talk about health. I did reports on food and nutrition. So it was a very thorough show. And I was about to go into my third season, when a new manager came to the TV company who wanted to change everything. So... I was out.

Then, after 12 years, I sold my gym, and around this time my sister said to me, "Hey, Barb. Martin Scorsese is in town doing a movie. Why don't you call him?" [CONTINUED ON PAGE 45]



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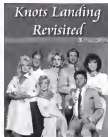
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# THEY MADE ME A CULT FILM STAR!: An Interview With Actor STUART WHITMAN

By ANTHONY PETKOVICH

NIGHT OF THE LEPUS was the turning point. After starring in the 1972 MGM sci-fi monster movie about giant, mutated bunny rabbits gobbling up humans like bite-sized corn candy, actor Stuart Whitman says his career took a sudden nosedive.

But it didn't crash and burn.

Far from it. Instead, the underrated actor—known for his mop of thick black hair, bushy eyebrows, cleft chin, muscular build, and all-around rugged looks—went on to make scores of entertaining movies and television appearances. Actually, in that same unforgettable year of '72, Whitman delivered one of his best performances as a disillusioned New England seafarer who falls in love with a mermaid, i.e. the "Lindemann's Catch" episode of Rod Serling's NIGHT GALLERY.

Indeed, after the 'dreaded' LEPUS, Whitman delivered a host of fun titles—many of 'em now straight-out cult films—including curious horror fare such as the Lawrence-Harvey-directed urban-cannibal flick, WELCOME TO ARROW BEACH (1974); Tobe Hooper's hillbilly-slasher pic EATEN ALIVE, as well as Curtis Harrington's possession tale RUBY (both 1977). Whitman also delivered a marvelously over-the-top rendition of People's Temple leader Jim Jones in GUYANA: CULT OF THE DAMNED (1979). There were engaging action pictures, too, like director J. Lee Thompson's THE WHITE BUFFALO (1977), Monte Helman's SHATTER (1974) and the Stacy Keach TV extravaganza HEMINGWAY (1968).

But hold on. What about Whitman's pre-bunny-on-the-loose work? Actually, in the 1960's the actor experienced what might be classified as his golden period, working regularly as one of Hollywood's leading stars. One of Whitman's greatest roles was his intense portrayal of a supposed child molester in THE MARK (1961)—and not because it garnered him an Academy Award nomination. Largely shot on location in Ireland, THE MARK features Whitman in an atypical, introspective performance as a sexual deviant trying to find his way back into society after serving a three-year prison sentence.

Aside from Whitman's outstanding work in THE MARK, many other engaging movies during his peak period included the mafia thriller MURDER, INC. (1960); the 1964 psychological drama SHOCK TREATMENT; 1965's star-studded comedy THOSE MAGNIFICENT MEN IN THEIR FLYING MACHINES; and the fantastic adventure/drama SANDS OF THE KALAHARI. Whitman also started doing a lot of macho-type movies at this time, like the westerns RIO CONCHOS (1964) and THE COMANCHEROS (1961).

CIMARRON STRIP (1967-1968) was Whitman's short-lived but exceptional TV western—which he starred in, as the no-nonsense Marshal Jim Crown, and produced—presenting 90-minute episodes, great actors (Richard Boone, Warren Oates and Robert Duvall, to name a few), and a relatively good helping of prime-time violence. To this day, CIMARRON STRIP still remains one of Whitman's all-time favorite projects.

Born in San Francisco in 1928, Stuart Whitman was largely raised in Los Angeles and New York. After a three-year stint with the Army Corps of Engineers, he was hired as an extra in George Pal's classic WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE (1951). He eventually landed a contract with 20th Century Fox in the '50s, during which time he made some

pher Steve Kiefer, who introduced me to the actor. Steve knew Whitman from having photographed him at numerous Golden Boot Award shows. In turn, when Steve asked if he'd be up for an interview, the legendary actor happily consented.

About a month later—on a sunny, picturesque August day, for which Southern California is world famous—Steve and I drove from North Hollywood up to Whitman's ranch in Montecito. And as the massive electronic front gates to the actor's well-fortified property opened, and we drove (and drove...and drove!) across the lavish home spread before finally reaching the main living quarters, I thought, 'Ah! Now this is the home of a bona fide Hollywood movie star.' Warmly greeting us, Whitman looked terrific. Indeed, comfortably dressed in a plaid shirt, blue jeans and tennis shoes, while wearing a pair of cool-looking, yellow-tinted aviator sunglasses, Whitman is amazingly fit for an octogenarian. (In fact, later, when giving us a tour of his home, he showed us his personal gym, complete free weights and Nautilus equipment, which he obviously puts to good use.)

Stuart and I spoke at an average-sized wooden picnic table next to the actor's quaint hacienda—with Steve, of course, joining us and actually adding the final amusing questions. Early on during my two-hour conversation with Whitman, his pleasant, young wife Judy brought us a snack of hummus, pita bread and ice tea, which really hit the spot. With the sun beaming down upon Stuart, Steve and me, and the refreshing Pacific ocean breeze keeping us cool, Whitman relaxedly sat back, smoked a Pedron cigar, and seemed to sincerely enjoy reminiscing about his past exploits both in front of and behind the camera. And, of course, he spoke in that marvelously distinctive, sonorous



of his most enduring films. Five decades and a staggering 180-plus movie/TV roles later, Whitman made his final screen appearance in 2000's THE PRESIDENT'S MAN. And aside from being a prolific actor, he's also had an incredibly successful second career in the real estate business.

As Stuart explains in his 2001 DVD commentary for THE MARK: It's been a long time since I've done a class-A film. I've been doing some off-the-hip kind of movies. I had some great opportunities along the way and passed off the wrong people... [Most probably in reference to his 'actor's strike' when refusing to continue work on two films—MURDER, INC. and SHATTER—after the original directors were fired, i.e. Stuart Rosenberg and Monte Helman, respectively; Whitman did, however, wind up finishing each movie.] But, thank God, all of my kids turned out well. I have some great grandkids, and life has been very nice to me... Like everyone, we have our ups and downs but nothing really serious. I don't lose any kids to drugs, thank God for that. No, I'm a lucky guy.

Sounds like a great ending to an interview. doesn't it? But we're just at the beginning. Keep in mind, too, that Whitman rarely gives interviews. Yet living in LA, I happened to, luckily, meet photogra-

pher voice that could only belong to Stuart Whitman. And sorry, Stu, but—as awkward as it might sound—we really don't mind occasionally viewing NIGHT OF THE LEPUS. It's not all that bad and it...uh...well...actually...maybe they shoulda gotten Harryhausen to do the effects (those 'monstrous' bunnies really do look a tad too cuddly)...

**SHOCK CINEMA:** In 1977 you starred in a fairly obscure film entitled THE BILLION DOLLAR FIRE. Can you tell us a bit about that one?

Stuart Whitman: We shot it in Romania, and I played Red Adair in the story. We actually had the whole coastline to ourselves while shooting that picture. We also had six wells on fire; they had them under control, though. That was around the time I was going through a divorce and went over to Europe to work.

I remember we were doing an outdoor shot with all of the actors, and the director [Mircea Dragana] was up on a hill with the Romanian Army. Yeah. We even had the Romanian Army there with us. And the assistant director said, "Okay, we're going to rehearse." But since it was an international movie, just about everyone started talking in a different language.

"Whoa! Whoa!" I said, "Wait a minute. I got the dialogue here, so you guys shut up." And they didn't know what the fuck I was saying. So I said, "Where's the director?" And the assistant said, "He's up there," and pointed to the hill where there was the whole fuckin' Romanian Army. "Go up there," I said, "and tell him to come on down here. He's directing this film, so we have to have some form of semblance here." So the assistant went up, spoke to the director, and came back down. "Well?" I asked him. "Where's the director?" And the assistant told me, "He says, 'You shoot the scene or we're gonna shoot you.' [laughs] That was behind the Iron Curtain. So, I played the fuckin' role... while everyone's talking at the same time. [laughs]"



Stuart Whitman and Maria Schell in THE MARK

**SC: Did you get recognized much as Jim Jones after playing the first-ever film version of him in GUYANA: CULT OF THE DAMNED?**  
Whitman: I did. When I went up to San Francisco to receive some kind of an award, I was out playing one night and returned to my hotel at about three a.m. And when I walked into the lobby some people there got hold of me and said, "God, we want to know more about Jim Jones. We know you had to have met him." I never met him," I told them. "You never met him? How did you do such a great job playing him, then?" "I just did some research. That's the only thing I knew about him."

**SC: Where did you shoot the movie?**

Whitman: On the outskirts of Mexico City.

**SC: Could director Rene Cardona, Jr. speak much English?**

Whitman: He spoke a little English. But there was a translator there named Hugo Stiglitz, who was an actor and an incredible character, and he helped with the translation.

**SC: How did you get involved in GUYANA: CULT OF THE DAMNED?**

Whitman: After the real-life Jim Jones episode took place in Guyana, Cardona called me up and said, "I'm gonna shoot this film, and I want you to do it." I speak a little bit of Spanish, and I said, "God almighty... Okay." I actually did two films for Cardona. What was the name of the other one?...

**SC: UNDER SIEGE (1980).**

Whitman: Right. Anyhow, a year or so after we'd finished CULT OF THE DAMNED, I was shooting a film in Key West, Florida, and got a call from Cardona, who wanted me to go to Puerto Rico to do [UNDER SIEGE]. "I can't do it," I said. "I'm right in the middle of this other film." "Well, do you work on the weekend?" he asked me. "No, we don't. We finish Friday nights and we're off Saturday and Sunday." "Okay. We'll shoot your whole part during one of your weekends. We'll have a jet pick you up, take you to Puerto Rico, and take you back when you're done shooting."

So when the jet arrived that Friday night, I took a friend and a couple of ladies, and we flew to Puerto Rico. When we arrived, there was a limo waiting, and the police escorted us to our hotel. The next day they took me to police headquarters — which is where I played the head of the department — and we shot all of my segments in two days. And come Monday morning, they flew us back to my other job in Key West. [laughs]

**SC: You've done a lot of westerns over the years and have appeared numerous times at the Golden Boot Awards. From where does the cowboy appeal come?**

Whitman: As a kid in Los Angeles, I frequented The Hitching Post, which was a little theatre outside of The Pantages on Hollywood Boulevard. And on Saturday afternoons there, we kids would take our cap guns, strap 'em on, and [laughs] be shooting the Indians, the bad guys, during the double features. But eventually one of the parents complained that our caps let off too much gun smoke in the theatre [laughs], and after that we couldn't take our guns to the theatre anymore.

I saw Roy Rogers on the big screen there and, oh God, just a whole bunch of western stars. So I loved cowboy movies at a very early age.

**SC: And when did the interest in acting arise?**

Whitman: My dad worked for Temporary Hall in New York as a collector. So, when I was only five years old, he'd sometimes pull me along and drop me off at the back row of the theatre. Well, we went there one night and there was a play going on. I'd never seen a play before. And after my dad collected the money from the cashier, he wanted to go — but I wanted to see the rest of the show. So we did. Then, after the show was over, I insisted that we go backstage so that I could touch the faces of the performers to see if they were real. So he took me backstage, and when I touched the actors' and actresses' faces, I thought, "They are real people!" [laughs] I think the bug hit me right then.

**SC: Did you learn to ride a horse when you were a kid or when you began making all of those westerns?**

Whitman: In New York we lived on 70th Street, and West End and 69th Street was kind of a slum area. I went to P.S. 67, and they had gangs, and when I was thirteen I was always gettin' into trouble. So they eventually had to tame me out, meaning that they sent me to a couple of ranches, and that's where I did a lot of riding — and how I learnt how to handle a horse. Also, when I'd watch Roy

Rogers ride horses in the movies, I told myself, "That's the way I want to ride." And I learned how to do it.

So, yeah, when I started doing westerns, I already knew how to handle horses. I remember the joke they pulled on me on my first western. In one scene, we jump off our horses, rob a bank, jump back on our horses and take off, with the posse chasing us. Well, when you lie a horse up to a hitching post, you throw the loop in there so you can just easily pull it out. But as a prank, they put a knot in there when I wasn't looking.

After we robbed the bank and ran out to our horses, I yanked and yanked at the rope, but it was knotted. So I wound up breaking the rein. [laughs] And with just one rein, I jumped on that horse and took off. Afterwards they said, "God damn! Looks like you really can ride." [laughs] Oh, yeah, people on movie sets sometimes play tricks on you.

**SC: According to my notes, you were a boxer in the Army.**

Whitman: A light heavyweight. I didn't have that many fights, about six or seven. I only did the boxing thing for three-day passes. [laughs] I was stationed at Fort Lewis [near Tacoma, Washington], and at that time they were shipping guys out to the Aleutian Islands and to Korea, even though the war hadn't yet started in Korea. They were scared about the Russians. And I was heavy into the training at that point in Fort Lewis.



Whitman and Peter Falk in MURDER, INC.

Then when I was at Camp Stillman [in California] — that's deport — where they do ship ya out — I ran into Joe Andary, who was the amateur lightweight champ of the world. He was in the Army there, and he saw me working out. I was hitting the bag, and he said, "God, I need a light-heavy. I can give you three-day passes if you fight on Thursday nights." So, that's what kept me stationed there — and kept me from being shipped overseas.

**SC: What happened when you got out of the Army?**

Whitman: I went to Ben Bard's acting classes [at the LA Academy of Dramatic Art]. And then I went to Stage Society; the Arthur Kennedy Group was what it was originally called, but they changed the

name to Stage Society. And at one point they brought in Michael Chekhov, so I studied with him.

**SC: And how did you get your foot in the door of the Hollywood movie studios?**

Whitman: I was playing football for [Los Angeles] City College and had a scholarship to attend UCLA. But while I was playing football at City, a movie scout came out, and he eventually asked me, "Do you want to work for Paramount? It would be a three-week run." "Yeah, Sure," I said. "What do you guys pay?" "I don't know... \$500 a week or something like that." "God!" I thought. "That's more money than I'd ever seen!" And when I got to Paramount and saw all of the pretty babes running all over the place [laughs], I thought, "Jesus Christ is this the business for me?" [laughs]

**SC: And your first film was WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE.**

Whitman: Right — as an extra. And the second film I did was *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL* (1951), where I play one of the soldiers surrounding the flying saucer.

I'll tell you something that goes down in history: James Dean and I were in *DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL*... both of us playing soldiers. And it was supposed to be a two-day bit for us. But we were shooting at night, so we'd sign in and hide out, and it lasted for about two weeks instead of two days. While Jimmy and I were working together on *DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL*, he told me that he was going off to The Actors Studio after he finished the movie. "Okay, Jimmy," I said, "I'm gonna go, too." But, even though I pretty much grew up in New York, I didn't go to The Actors Studio — and I didn't get to know all of the New York guys, which I should have.

But Jimmy went off to The Actors Studio in New York and eventually did *THE IMMORALIST* on Broadway. They were actually going to fire him right after the opening. But when Jimmy stole all the critics' awards, they suddenly wanted to keep him. "Fuck you," he told them. "You fired me — I'm off." So he went to Hollywood.

**SC: And a few years after Dean passed away, you were in a number of HIGHWAY PATROL episodes, starting as Sergeant Walters.**

Whitman: Yeah, I did 16 episodes. My wife at the time — I had four kids with her — she said, "Stuart, I can't go to the grocery store anymore. They cut off your tab. You have to pay them." So I went over to the stockyard, which was downtown in East LA, and worked for the slaughterhouse whenever they needed somebody. I hated it. They gave me a sledgehammer to kill the cattle when they came through... "Oh fuck!" I said, "I hate doing this." Dropping those cows...

Then they hired me to do an episode of *HIGHWAY PATROL*, and Brod [Crawford] and I immediately clicked. After that, I'd call up Brod when I needed 90 dollars — because that's how much they paid per show — and say, "What's going on?" "You broke?" he'd ask me. "Yeah." "Well, come on over and work for me. That'll be a real, then I can drink since you'll do more of the dialogue." [laughs] We had two and a half days to shoot each one of those shows, and the vodka was just coming out of Brod. He had a shanny to wipe it off and bring it out.

**SC: You also starred with Crawford and Dorothy Dandridge in THE DECKS RAN RED (1958).**

Whitman: Dorothy Dandridge. Poor baby... She was previously married to one of the two Nicholas brothers [Harold] and their daughter, who was [brain-damaged], eventually had to be placed in a mental institution. And poor Dorothy was going through all of that turmoil while she was making the movie. A goddess, that's what she was.

You know how Brod got that picture? Listen to this... Andrew and Virginia Stone both produced it, with Andrew also directing. And I said to them,



Dorothy Dandridge and Stuart Whitman in *THE DECKS RAN RED*

"Who are you going to get to play this role [of Henry Scott]?" And they said, "Oh God, we'd love to have Broderick Crawford, but he's a drunk." And I said, "Wait a second. If he tells you he's not going to drink, then he won't drink." "No," they said. And I said, "Look, call him up and talk to him. Tell him that I'm in the picture." So they called Brod up and hired him. And just as I told them, Brod didn't drink while making the picture. We went out to sea to shoot a couple of days at a time, and Brod didn't touch a drop until the last day of shooting — then he let go. [laughs] But that's how he got that job. It was actually a good little movie. James Mason was an interesting guy, and we became fast friends. Oh God, he was a sweet heart. But Brod and he just didn't get along.

**SC: Any more anecdotes to relate about your friendship with Crawford?**

Whitman: When he was living in Sunset Towers in Hollywood, I'd go over [laughs] and have a couple of White Russians... with a lotta vodka... And there was a guy who came in every time I was there. He had a suit and wore a hat, and he'd come in, go behind the bar, pour a couple of shots of whiskey, shoot 'em, and leave. I mean, that's what he'd always do: come in, mix himself a couple of shooters, down 'em, and leave. Never said a word. So eventually I got tired of seeing the guy. He never said hello.

Brod and I were up there drinking one afternoon, and this same guy shows up, and I finally

said to Brod, "Who is this guy?" "Talk to him," he said. And I did. I asked him who he was and what he did. Turns out he was a cop, used to walk a beat. Now he was a plainclothes detective.

"Oh yeah," the cop told me, "Brod and I have been friends for a long time. First time I met Brod, I was pounding on the door of his house here on Sunset because there was a disturbance going on. Brod opened up the door, stark-ass naked."

"What the fuck do you want?" he asked me. "Listen, Mr. Crawford, the neighbors are complaining. Please keep it down." And he just said, "Ahh, fuck off!" and slammed the door in my face." [laughs]

Well, a couple weeks later this same cop gets a call that there's another disturbance going at Brod Crawford's home. "Ahhh," he said, "I can't wait to get this guy!" because Crawford had already slammed the door in his face. So he goes up to Brod's place and just busts in. Well, Brod had a guy hanging out the window, seven floors up, and was saying to him, "You guinea son-of-a-bitch! If you don't straighten out, I'm gonna drop your fuckin' ass right now!" "Pull that man back in!" the cop told him. Well [laughs], that was Frank Sinatra who Crawford had a hold of. And they were shooting a picture together. And that's how Brod and the cop became pals. [laughs]

**SC: Hey, I don't want to forget about MURDER, INC.**

Whitman: I did that while I was still under contract at 20th. They said, "You're going off to New York to do this thing called *MURDER, INC.*" I said, "I'm reading the script, and I'm thinking, 'Wow! What a role here... Abe Reles.' And when I got to New York, and they picked me up in a limo at the airport, they asked me, 'How did you like the script?' "Oh God, I just loved it." And they said, "We got an interesting young guy; a character actor named Peter Fox, who's gonna play Abe Reles." "Wait," I said, "I thought that was my role." "No, no. You're going to play the kid in it... with Mary Britt... the love affair part of the story." And I said, "Oh shit. I don't want to do it." So I called up [Spyros] Skouras [note: President of 20th Century Fox, from 1942 to 1962], and said, "No, Mr. Skouras, that's not the role I wanted to do." "No, do it," he said.

Anyway, Peter [Folk] and I were getting along, getting some good stuff into the picture, but when they fired the director, Stuart Rosenberg, we had a sit-down strike between us actors. But then a full-out strike was coming along, and 20th said, "The strike is coming up, so we have to finish this picture right away — before it hits!" Well, the very day we finished that picture, the strike hit. But that's why there are two directors credited on *MURDER, INC.* Burt Balaban was the producer, so when Rosenberg got fired, he stepped in.

**SC: Why did Rosenberg get fired?**

Whitman: He had a good cameraman, and the studio thought Rosenberg was taking too long to shoot the picture. Balaban only came in for the last week's worth of work.

**SC: What was the challenge for you in making THE MARK?**

Whitman: Show! I was doing a screen test at 20th with Lee Remick for a movie called *THE CANDY MAN*, which [Tony] Richardson was going to direct. And I got a telephone call from Kurt Frings, my agent at the time. And Kurt tells me, "Don't go back." "But I'm shooting a film right now," I said.



"Don't go back to the set," he said. "What do you mean, 'Don't go back to the set'?" "Don't go back. Just go home, pack a bag, and catch the four o'clock flight to London this afternoon. You're gonna shoot a movie in Ireland!" I asked, "Well, what's the name of the picture?" "Not to worry. Don't ask any questions. Just get on the plane and go."

And I remember racing to the airport to catch the plane and running into the actor Dana Clark. "Where you going, Stuart?" he asked me. "I'm off to do a thing called THE MARK," I told him, "but I don't know anything about it." "THE MARK?" he said. "My God! I really wanted to play that role. Jesus Christ!" So that was the only indication I received that it was something special... Well, Richard Burton was originally supposed to do my role in THE MARK, but he was starring in CAMELOT and couldn't get out of his commitment to do the play. So Kurl — who handled Burton and Maria Schell, the female lead in THE MARK and wonderful to work with — he squeaked me into the thing.

So they put me up in a hotel in London, and I had three days there before going on location to Ireland. Now, when I arrived at the London hotel, all these British reporters were asking me, "What do you think about doing this movie?" "I haven't read it," I told them. "I don't know. Let me read it, then I'll tell ya." So I got rid of all of the reporters because I really didn't know what the fuck the movie was all about. And in my hotel room, when I finally read the script, I kind of freaked out. So much so that I was thinking to myself, "Well, I could get sick and tell them that I can't do the movie... I had all kinds of excuses that I was going to lay on 'em so that I didn't have to tackle the project. Then I thought, 'Well, fuck it if I'm in the right business or the wrong business, I'll know if I can pull this one off. And if I can, I'll be alright.' But, yeah, it was difficult to do."

And that's when I first met [Rod] Steiger. Since Rod and I had a lot of scenes together, he said, "You want to come over to my house, and we'll just run down the lines and get familiar with it?" "Absolutely," I said to him.

**SC: In THE MARK, we eventually learn that your character didn't molest the female child because he had done so, he would have, quite understandably, received less — if any — sympathy from the audience.**

Whitman: Absolutely. You know the director J. Lee Thompson? He once said to me, "That's where you fucked up that movie. You should have committed the crime." [laughs]

**SC: What was it like working with director Guy Green?**

Whitman: Guy Green was like a schoolteacher. I kind of hated him at the time. Then after the show we became best of friends. Sometimes we'd do 14-ske scenes because Green was very critical about everything. He wasn't controlling, just very particular about the dialogue. I think it was his second film. He was David Lean's cinematographer for quite a few years before that time.

**SC: The next year you did THE LONGEST DAY (1962), which seemed to include pretty much every big star in Hollywood at the time.**

Whitman: I believe it was late 1961, and I was experiencing somewhat of a lull at 20th. Darryl Zanuck was producing this big war movie, THE LONGEST DAY, in France. So the casting department said to me, "You're not doing anything right now — you wanna go to Paris and drop off about



Stuart Whitman in RIO CONCHOS

a dozen boxes of cigars to Mr. Zanuck? We'll put you up at The Hotel Raphael, and you can stay there as long as we need you to." "Geez," I said, "that sounds good."

So when I got to the Paris set, Zanuck's assistant wanted me to give him the cigars so that he could give 'em to Zanuck. "No, no, no," I said. "I gotta give 'em to Mr. Zanuck personally. Under orders." And when I delivered the cigars, Zanuck looked at me and said, "You want to be in this picture?" "Yeah, sure. I'm here, why not?" So that's how that happened. Crazy business. [laughs] Darryl actually wound up directing my segments in the movie.

**SC: On the audio commentary for THE MARK, you state that THOSE MAGNIFICENT MEN IN THEIR FLYING MACHINES was one of the most enjoyable movies you've ever made.**

Whitman: Oh God, it was fun. All of those actors... Terry-Thomas became one of my best friends. At the time, I was living in Hollywood, and two weeks after we finished the film, Terry said he was coming to visit me. And when he got to Hollywood, he said, "I'm here. I'm coming up." "Okay," I said. "By the way," Terry says, "you got any gin?" "As a matter of fact... I don't." "I'd broken my ankle, but I didn't tell him that. But once he got up to my place — with half a case of gin — and saw that I was laid up, he said, 'Well, let's get the fireplace going.' I said, "My leg's messed up, Terry, so I can't get around very well... So he goes outside the place with an ax, drinking his gin, and just starts chopping wood so that we could have a fireplace going. [laughs]

The following winter he came over to see me in Malibu, which is where I was also living. It was winter, but he couldn't wait to get into that water. There was nobody else on the beach. I used to hit it every day, too. And when Terry got in that ocean, he swam out about two miles. Oh God, what a character. Special.

**SC: What was MAGNIFICENT MEN director Ken Annakin like?**

Whitman: A sweetheart. He married his assistant. She was a sweetheart, too.

**SC: Originally they wanted Dick Van Dyke to play what became your role, but as the American cowboy in the race, you're terrific.**

Whitman: That's what Ken said, too — even though at the time he said that 20th Century Fox stuffed me down his throat. [laughs]

**SC: In the documentary on the making of THOSE MAGNIFICENT MEN, Annakin says that Sarah Miles and you didn't get along during the production, because you made a pass at her.**

Whitman: Oh, God — continually! [cracks up] At the time, she was going with Robert Bolt, the great screenwriter. As a matter of fact, after they got married, they came to visit me in Malibu, and it was all friendly. But, no, I didn't have any luck with Sarah. [laughs]

**SC: Before MAGNIFICENT MEN, you did an interesting western with Richard Boone called RIO CONCHOS.**

Whitman: I didn't want to do RIO CONCHOS. That's when Richard Zanuck said, "If you do this movie, we'll give you MAGNIFICENT MEN in their flying machines and pay you outside the contract." And that turned out to be the big-gest money I'd ever made on a film. So I had to do RIO CONCHOS, even though I didn't like the way it was written. I had a meeting with Richard Boone, the director [Gordon Douglas] —



Sarah Miles and Stuart Whitman in THOSE MAGNIFICENT MEN...

a fine director — [Tony] Frandosa and Jim Brown, who'd just come off the football field. It was Jim's first film, and he had somewhat of a chip on his shoulder, but we still became friends.

We shot many of the exteriors for RIO CONCHOS in Utah, came home to do some interiors, were going back to Utah but got snowed out. We eventually did get all of the footage we needed, but by this time I was really worried that I was going to miss MAGNIFICENT MEN in their flying machines. [laughs]

And when I went to London to do MAGNIFICENT MEN, The Ad Lib was a popular club where The Beatles and The Rolling Stones would typically hang out at night. Well, I had a Bentley with a chauffeur, and I'd have him take me to The Ad Lib, where I'd be pickin' up chicks. . . Actually, 20th gave me so much per diem money that I

Whitman: I think the best one is "Battleground," with Telly Savalas and Warren Oates. Warren left us too soon. The episode with Richard Boone ["The Roarer"] was elected to go into the TV/Film Festival in Monte Carlo. And I remember Lucille Ball and her husband were up in my suite when the phone call came that the show had been cancelled. The PR guy then called back about six or seven minutes later and said, "No, they picked it up." Then he called again and said, "No, it's been cancelled."

Lucille Ball said, "Come work for me." "No," I told her, "I don't want to do any more television. Jesus Christ. I can't put up with those guys who work in TV and justify their jobs."

**SC: NIGHT OF THE LEPUS was the movie which you feel put a major dent in your movie career. While I personally don't think it was so terrible, it is one of those rare Stuart Whitman movies where, up on the screen, it's quite obvious that you weren't enthused by the project.**

Whitman: [laughs] Well, I was bankable until that movie. But after it came out during Easter... giant rabbits at Easter time... I mean, the thing didn't go anywhere at the box office.

I didn't want to do the movie from the get-go. I was scheduled to do another movie with Les Remick because they cancelled THE CANDY MAN. I stuck that three months aside, and I was hot then. MGM was the name of the guy who ran MGM at the time? He has a daughter named Skye... James T. Aubrey, Jr. I said to him, "I see you've shelved this picture. We have a contract, so you owe me some money for the picture." And he said, "You can sue me." I said, "Oh, man, that'll take four or five years." "Well, do this movie [NIGHT OF THE LEPUS] instead. We'll pay you your salary." "Oh, it's a piece of shit!" "Well," he said, "then take me to court."

So that's why I did the film — because I had to.

**SC: The director, William F. Claxton, had many cowboy stars in LEPUS. Aside from you, there's Rory Calhoun, DeForest Kelley and even Paul Fix.**

Whitman: It had a great cast [including Janet Leigh], but that script... Oh, fuck. When I read it I knew it was gonna be fucked. I got sick as a dog when we were making it, too. I remember being so ill, I was drinking two bottles of Mylanta a day. Drinking that shit to quiet things down. It was torture doing that movie.

But I'll tell you how [the movie's producer] A.C. Lyles endeared himself to me. I went up to his office at Metro, and he said, "Okay, okay, I know how you feel about this movie. Here, talk to this guy on the phone." He hands me the phone... and Jimmy Cagney is on the other end. I hadn't met Cagney before or since, and we had about a two-hour conversation. A.C. said, "I'm going to leave you here. Stay as long as you want. Just lock the doors when you leave." So I talked to Jimmy Cagney on the phone for two hours. It was a precious experience.

**SC: As a kid, I loved the NIGHT GALLERY episode "Lindemann's Catch," where you played**

**the fisherman who catches a mermaid.**

Whitman: Oh, my God. [laughs]

**SC: It was an original Rod Serling script, directed by Jeff Corey.**

Whitman: That's right. It's funny because last week my wife Judy was looking so spanky, and I said to her, "Ah! You look just like a mermaid!" And she said, "A mermaid? What do you mean a mermaid?" And I said, "I did a movie with a mermaid. I know mermaids!" [laughs] It's funny you should mention that show.

**SC: During the early-'70s you did a weird horror film directed by Laurence Harvey called WELCOME TO ARROW BEACH.**

Whitman: We shot that here [in Santa Barbara]. I put my fifth kid in a little Protestant school right here in town, so I knew the area. I bought 30 acres up here, sold off five, five, and four acres, then I build that house down in the corner. You can't see it, but you'll drive by it later. So, I've got 16 acres left, and that I'm hanging on to, no matter who makes me an offer. [laughs]

But, see, Larry Harvey was my neighbor in Malibu at the time, and he wanted me to play the lead in ARROW BEACH because he only wanted to direct the picture. I said, "No, man. I read the script, and I don't want to be a cannibal. But I want to work with you. So I'll play the deputy."

Larry's wife at the time, Joan Perry, had previously married [Larry] "King Kong" Conn, and she had a house up there, and said, "Shurt, I'll trade you this house for your land." And I said, "Tell you what, Joan, if you give me your holdings in Columbia Pictures, I'll give you the land." "Oh, you son of a bitch!" she said. "Well..." I said. [laughs]

**SC: You've been quite successful with real estate over the years. Where did you pick up the knack? Any formal training?**



"Wabbit hunting" with Rory Calhoun in NIGHT OF THE LEPUS

bought a motorcycle and a Jaguar while I was there and sent 'em home.

So what I'd do, since I couldn't knock Sarah Miles over [laughs], is I'd bring a different beauty every morning to the set. And Sarah would say to me [in scolding manner], "You're just a playboy is what you are!" [laughs] I only did it to aggravate her.

**SC: Tell us how you got involved with the television series CIMARRON STRIP.**

Whitman: I hadn't worked in about nine months. At the time, I was with the Ziegler Ross agency. I went with them because they were in the literary field. But I made a mistake because they didn't represent any actors and, as I said, I hadn't worked in about nine months.

Then they said, "Listen, this [series] has been offered to you." So I met with the head of CBS and said, "Well, I've got to get out of the show." And I did I got 33-1/3 percent of it. It's been on Starz Encore, and the whole series is out on DVD. You can get individual episodes or the entire series from Amazon.

**SC: How much input did you have on the show? Did you try to make it as gritty as possible?**

Whitman: Yeah, as much as we could. Couldn't show blood. Couldn't use any cuss words or anything like that. We were pretty restricted there. And by that time, CIMARRON STRIP was really the last of the TV westerns. We shot a 60-minute pilot, then they said, "No, let's turn it into a 90-minute show." It took us 11 months to shoot 23 films — and we had 10 days to shoot each episode.

**SC: Do you have any favorite CIMARRON STRIP episodes?**



Stuart Whitman in the NIGHT GALLERY episode "Lindemann's Catch"

Whitman: No. My dad started developing his expertise in the field when we came back out here during wartime. He was doing some landing strips for the Army because, since one of his legs was paralyzed, he couldn't actually go into the service. So he got involved in the land business, and that's where I learned it, working with him.

**SC: How long have you lived on this ranch?**

Whitman: I bought the land in '78. [Points over to the main house, about 30 feet behind me] That was an old dairy. I wanted to give it a Spanish style look, so it just kind of mushroomed.

**SC:** Well, it's a beautiful ranch. So tell me, what Stuart Whitman movies really stand out for you?

Whitman: THE MARK was the most challenging film. The most fun was THOSE MAGNIFICENT MEN IN THEIR FLYING MACHINES — and, of course, working on THE COMANCHEROS with the Duke. He was something special. Did you hear about how I got that part?

**SC:** Please, let's hear it.

Whitman: I was filming FRANCIS OF ASSISI (1961) in Italy with [director] Michael Curtiz. It was wintertime and a hard shoot. And near the end of the film, Michael said, "Stuart, take a look at this script. It's called 'The Comancheros.' I read it over and said, 'Boy, there's a role in there that I'd love to be in.' And he said, 'I'd love to have you in it. I'm directing it. But the studio has got somebody else cast for that particular part. But we don't start filming for another month, so when you get back to Hollywood, see if you can get on the picture. I'd like to have you.' When I got back, I asked the studio, and they said, 'No, you can't do it. We've got it all sewn up.' So I called up Kurt Frings and told him what Curtiz said to me. 'Well,' he said, 'go see the Duke at Paramount. He's on Stage 17. Go talk to him.'

Anyhow, I worked my way into Paramount, went to Stage 17, and when I got there, [Wayne] was just going off to his dressing room. So I followed him in. "What do you want?" he said. And I said, "I worked for your company" — it was on a Randolph Scott film — "and Michael Curtiz wants me in your next picture. I really want to do it, but the studio is putting up some blockage there." So I hung around there with Wayne for part of the day, and at the end of the day he asked me, "You really want to do the picture, huh? Okay, you've got the job." That's how I got THE COMANCHEROS.

**SC:** Other than the actors and actresses already discussed, who are some other performers with whom you've worked over the years who've really stood out?

Whitman: Well, working with Lee Marvin, who was my neighbor in Malibu, was a kick. My God, I really enjoyed him. He'd go off on two-week binges. Neville Brand, too. He also lived in Malibu. I worked with him in EATEN ALIVE. When we first met, we hit it off. I don't know if I ever saw that movie, though. [laughs]

**SC:** Getting into more personal territory, what are some of your hobbies?

Whitman: I have a tennis court up here. And I have a gang of nine guys who like to play. I'll show it to you.

**SC:** Just out of curiosity, have you ever directed a picture?

Whitman: I directed a segment of a war movie with Simone Signoret called THE DAY AND THE HOUR (1963). For one specific scene, I took the camera away from René Clément, one of the finest French directors, and shot it. In the movie I play a WWII aviator who gets shot down behind enemy lines.

**SC:** How did you get involved in that movie?

Whitman: The Beverly Hills Hotel has been a favorite spot of mine. And I remember going there to see a friend who'd just come into town. And when I got there, I ran into Alain Delon coming out



John Wayne and Whitman in THE COMANCHEROS

of the elevator. "God, Stuart!" he said. "You gotta come with me." So I went up the elevator with him, he took me to a hotel room, and in there was René Clément. They'd come over to Hollywood to cast this role. Alain introduced me to René who didn't speak any English, but Clément wanted me to do the movie. "I'm not sure," I told him. "I'm under contract to 20th, and I don't know if they'll loan me out." "Oh, we'll work on that," Alain said.

So I got the picture, and we shot it all over France for five months. Now, in one of the scenes

when the Nazis had captured me and were interrogating me... waterboarding me... that kind of stuff, they tried to make me look like a wimp, and I said, "No, René, I'm not going to do it that way." So we stopped shooting. And shortly after that, when I was taking a plane over to Nice, I happen to get a seat right next to Sidney Buchman [co-writer of THE MARK screenplay]. He was also going to Nice, and I mentioned the problem we were having with the scene in Clément's movie and asked him if he'd rewrite it.

Yves Montand was down there at Nice, as well. He had a thing going with Marilyn Monroe, and I had a thing going with his wife Simone. So we were one big happy family... in a way. [laughs] Anyhow, we worked with Sidney, he rewrote the scene, I went back to the set and said to René, "I know how to do this," and he let me shoot that particular re-written scene.

I also recall Picasso having lunch with us there in France. Salvador Dalí became a close friend of mine while I was there, too. He had all of these Edwardian type of characters constantly hanging around him. [laughs]

**SC:** During the '60s — particularly during the height of your western period — you starred in a lot of very physical movies. Did you ever get hurt while shooting any of those films?

Whitman: We were on a sound stage for THE FIERCEST HEART (1961), and I had to jump on a horse, wheel it out, and take off. I had no idea... didn't even think about it... but they had Formica on the deck and dirt on top of it. So when I wheeled out, the horse went down, and I went down with it, and it caught my leg. They had to get the horse off of me and my fuckin' leg. And the next day I'm supposed to be going off to Rome to make FRANCIS OF ASSISI with Michael Curtiz. I

wasn't going to let the accident with the horse stop me, though.

Now, in my very first scene for FRANCIS OF ASSISI, I'm coming down a mountain on a horse, and I have to stop, do some dialogue, then cross a nearby little bridge that dropped about 25 feet. And it had cobblestones. So I had to come down that mountain and pull the horse up, and it scared the shit out of me 'cause I only had one leg, and I thought I was going to go over that bridge. I couldn't get a hold of the horse with my injured leg, and [laughs] I was coming down right to that bridge. I had to go through about three pages of dialogue with [Bradford Dillman], and I was so scared that it made everything work on the first take. And that was the first scene they shot with me in the movie. I came down that son of a bitch with one leg... [laughs]... totally scared I'd be gon' off that cliff.

I'll tell you a funny story... You've got me going now... [laughs] Back in the '70s I was in Santa Monica getting my car washed and a big guy, muscles all over him, introduced himself to me and said, "You're still living, huh?" And I said, "Yeah." He said, "God, I gotta tell you..." it was Schwarzenegger... "I just won the seventh medal" for weightlifting, "but when I saw you in SANDS OF THE KALAHARI, I decided that's what I want to do. I want to be a movie star!"



Stuart Whitman and Stanley Baker in SANDS OF THE KALAHARI

**SC:** One of my favorite movies, period.

Whitman: Stanley Baker was great in it. Susannah York, too. And how I got that movie... The guy who later did that television series... THE A-TEAM... who was he?...

**SC:** George Peppard.

Whitman: Right, George Peppard. He went out to South Africa to shoot SANDS OF THE KALAHARI, was on location for two days, and eventually realized that he had to fight with baboons in the picture. So he hired a private plane and split. Split! Just left the whole fuckin' company there.

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 45]

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# FILM REVIEWS

## THE MOONSHINE WAR (Video Screams; 1970).

At first glance, the MGM Prohibition-era, hitbilly drama looks like a sure thing, with its eclectic cast, bloody agenda and, most importantly, screenplay written by Elmore Leonard and based on his own 1969 novel. No surprise, the man responsible for creating JACKIE BROWN, OUT OF SIGHT and JUSTIFIED supplies plenty of colorful characters, but fast direction by Richard Quine (SYNANONI), misguided casting and dumb-as-dead decisions sabotage the fun.

Crooked federal prohibition agent Frank Long (ex-PRISONER Patrick McGouhan) takes a break from enforcing the Volstead Act and shows up in rural Kentucky, determined to steal a legendary cache of aged, home-made whiskey (150 barrels = 4500 gallons!) worth a fortune and belonging to local lug Son Martin (Alan Alda). But when this revenuer finds himself seriously outnumbered, he calls in some unorthodox reinforcements — a trio of city-slicker soapbaths consisting of sadistic dentist Dr. Emmett Taubee (Richard Widmark), ditty whore Miley (GET TO KNOW YOUR RABBIT's Susanne Zenor) and his driver Dual Matters (singer-songwriter Lee Hazlewood, of "Those Boots Were Made For Walkin'" fame).

When Martin refuses to deal with these out-of-towners, Long and his makeshift ill army move onto harsher, even more underhanded tactics, like threatening his moonshiner neighbors and lynching Martin's black worker Adam (jazz-blues vocalist Joe Williams). Even Long soon begins to regret allying with these seriously fucked-up individuals, culminating with a siege of Son Martin's home (in a typically cynical Elmore twist, the entire county turns out to watch the carnage, peering on a hillside while the two factions kill each other).

Like a lot of Leonard fare, all of these characters have severe flaws. They're greedy, vicious, manipulative, or simply self-serving a--holes — in other words, a believably scummy slice of humanity. Unfortunately, this hit-and-miss effort continually wimps out in order to win a safe GP rating.

New York City-born Alda has a lousy southern accent, and the character's substance might seem more admirable if his listless performance didn't feel like a contractual obligation. McGouhan overplays his sniveling caricature, Widmark plays his evil bastard with aplomb, Hazlewood is supremely sweaty and sleazy, plus there's WALTONS-gangsta Will Geer as the Sheriff, who turns a blind eye to bootlegging, HOLMES & YO-YO's John Schuck as his Deputy, Bo Hopkins, Harry Carey, Jr. and Charles Tyner are neighbors, plus 22-year-old, brunette Ten Garr has her clothes stolen by Hazlewood. The cinema-logography by Richard H. Kline (BODY HEAT) does a mediocre job of making California look like Kentucky, while Neal Hefti's ill-suited soundtrack is peppered with hokey Southern Rock and Ray Oberson's soaring rendition of "It Takes All Kinds of People" severely undercuts the film's intense finale.

## YOUTH TERROR: THE VIEW FROM BEHIND THE GUN / LEFTY: ERINERUNG AN EINEN TOTEN IN BROOKLYN (Lefty: Memories of a Dead One in Brooklyn) (both 1978).

New York City was a shithole during the late-'70s, with the Big Apple on the verge of bankruptcy and the South Bronx labeled the murder, rape and aggravated assault capital of America. These two gritty TV-documentaries lacked the problem of youth crime and life in this huge, screwed-up city in their own unique fashions, while capturing plenty of unforgettable images.

Even before the hour-long ABC NEWS "CLOSE UP" episode entitled YOUTH TERROR: THE VIEW FROM BEHIND THE GUN was broadcast on June 29, 1978, this stark portrait of urban crime attracted controversy. Its unflinching subject matter — not to mention, the unbleeped profanity — was a baited move for network prime time, and several affiliates were so skittish that they bumped the 10 p.m. program to 11:30. Others preempted it altogether.

Filmed over a nine-month period, throughout the winter of 1977-78, award-winning director-producer Helen Whitney mostly lets her footage do the talking, kicking off with an exploration of teens living on the streets of a

hardly-recognizable Williamsburg, Brooklyn. It's an amazing time capsule of graffiti-covered subway cars, blocks of burnt-out buildings, junkies huddled around a flaming trashcan, and gangs like "The Dirty Ones" roaming their turf, with one guy recalling an abusive family life that he perpetuated by joining a gang and "breakin' heads." A Phoenix House youth counselor also raps with his kids about their criminal behavior, but Whitney mostly sticks to these mean streets, crisscrossing the region in hopes of examining the rise in youth crime and its causes (the inequality of justice, drugs, poverty, a general lack of hope), as people do whatever it takes to survive or feed their family.

Later on, Whitney crosses the Hudson to New Jersey and visits a typical tenement — no hot water, an electric hot plate as the only source of heat, an overworked mother and M.L.A. father, plus kids who believe the only way to get ahead is to steal. Then it's onto a South Bronx classroom and finally prison, with its juvenile offenders' ambivalence about their fate providing a depressing epilogue. Although a little preachy at times, saddled with an obvious social agenda and occasionally perpetuating the very worst stereotypes (like a black woman's teeny apartment crammed with fetterless children), it's also sprinkled with grim footage that probably blew the minds of complacent, middle-class, white couch potatoes.

A German film crew for station NDR (Norddeutscher Rundfunk) picked the perfect time to visit New York City for their street gang documentary, LEFTY: ERINERUNG AN EINEN TOTEN IN BROOKLYN, as the area sweltered through a brutal summer heatwave and the infamous 1977 blackout. For five weeks, director Max H. Rehbein and his crew actually lived in the basement of a Brooklyn house owned by the parents of Brother Lou (Louie Morales), the leader of "The Sex Boys" (named after the street they hung out on, Essex — after dropping the first two letters), filming many of that gang's most private moments and digging even deeper than the aforementioned ABC special.

Unfortunately, the print's narration is in unsubtitled German, but their footage alone makes this an astonishing, 88-minute artifact.

"Lefty" (Charles "Carlos" Valentine) is the latest "Sex Boys" casualty, first glimpsed in the Kings County morgue after being stabbed to death near Greenpoint's McCarren Pool. Tempers within the gang are running hot, with Lou trying to keep his soldiers under control. The filmmakers follow them as they strut past razed buildings in their gang colors, leap subway turnstiles, convene a rooftop gang meeting, share brews and joints, perform some general vandalism, and celebrate Lefty's truncated life with street fireworks. That's intercut with Sgt. Frank Serpico, from the 75th Precinct's youth gang task force, as he patrols the neighborhood, attempts to "nod" with gang members and ventures into one of their boarded-up-building clubhouses, in hopes of quelling tensions with "The Crazy Homies" from Coney Island.

Sometimes helping their community (aiding neighbors during a late-night apartment fire), other times prepping for war (a meeting with "The Ghetto Brothers" to purchase pistols) and often just having everyday interactions (arguing with girlfriends, getting seriously ugly tattoos), it's an intimate, unfilmed peek into "The Sex Boys." Without question, the most striking moments occur an hour in, because even a crime-induced blackout doesn't stop these crazy Germans from venturing into the war-zone-style streets with their cameras — filming Molotov-tossing kids, ransacked stores, looters fighting each other over an armful of clothes, and the overwhelmed police precinct.

Rehbein adopts a fly-on-the-wall approach, with German narration and some bizarre synth soundtrack music added in post, and they must've been pounding back shots of Schnapps in the editing room when their tripped-out Halloween-party/haunted-house finale was conceived. From the shocking desolation of the South Bronx, to the bustling Coney Island boardwalk after dark, to Rikers Island — it's all captured with an outsider's inquisitive eye and an almost TAXI DRIVER-esque amount of nighttime urban imagery. LEFTY is sprawling and uncensored, but also absolutely fascinating.





## "making it"

20th CENTURY FOX presents "MAKING IT" starring MICHAEL T. MASON, JAMES LEIGH, and JAMES LEIGH. Directed by MICHAEL T. MASON. Screenplay by JAMES LEIGH. Music by JAMES LEIGH. Produced by JAMES LEIGH. Released by 20th CENTURY FOX.

### MAKING IT (1971).

Awash in teenage sex, casual drug use, groovy slang, heavy-handed messages, and recognizable character actors, **MAKING IT** primarily succeeds nowadays as a far-out blast from the past. The script by future-Venety editor Peter Bart (based on James Leigh's 1965 novel, "What Can You Do?") is a loose series of vignettes following high school rebel Phil Fuller (19-year-old Kristoffer Tabori, son of Viveca Lindfors and director Don Siegel), as he skates through life on his natural charm. Although the feature debut by John Erman (**ALEXANDER: THE OTHER SIDE OF DAWN**) desperately strives to be hip and honest, it more often winds up forced and strident.

Phil lives in Albuquerque with his terrified-of-middle-age mom (Joyce Van Patten), toils around suburbia on his motorbike and "makes it" whenever possible, from an affair with the high school coach's horny wife (Marilyn Mason, **THE TROUBLE WITH GIRLS**) to lowering the inhibitions of ditty blonde teen Debbie (Sherry Miles, **THE VELVET VAMPIRE**) by dumping a bag of pot into her dinner. Yes, Phil's a snotty l'il shit, but with just enough smarts and sense of humor that you don't feel like immediately ventilating his skull with a claw hammer. Life isn't always easy though, and Phil eventually faces the consequences of his actions — a pissed-off lover, an enraged husband, death, pregnancy — with the story taking an exceedingly serious late turn involving abortion (this was pre-Roe vs. Wade, folks) and a downright wrongheaded final communion.

The film has a believable veneer, courtesy of cinematographer Richard C. Glouner (**PAYDAY**), but the characters are its undoing. The adults are either inept, desperate, pathetic, or stupid, while Tabori plays fast-talking Fuller broadly, with his surface quirks and wise-ass remarks closer to a sitcom creation rather than real life. On the other hand, 25-year-old Bob Balaban might not pass as a teenager, but still nails his supporting turn as nerdy leftist Willie, Phil's best friend. At school, Lawrence Pressman plays Phil's desperate-to-be-cool English teacher (the type that namedrops Holden Caulfield); **CHARLEY'S ANGELS'** David Doyle is the flustered principal; 1959's big-screen Tarzan, Denny Miller, plays Coach Skeeter; and John Fiedler (**THE BOB NEWHART SHOW's** midgettoast Mr. Peterson) is a health instructor struggling with the topic of masturbation. Pamela Hensley (**ROLLERBALL**) can also be seen fleetingly as a bar maid, plus in their iciest casting decision, future-**EIGHT IS ENOUGH** patriarch Dick Van Patten turns up as one of Mrs. Fuller's lovers. Off-screen, the two were actually brother and sister!

### DIESEL (Video Screams; 1985).

During the late-1960's and '70s, Robert Kramer was considered one of the most acclaimed independent directors in the US, thanks to experimental, politically-radical features like **ICE**, **THE EDGE**, and **MILES TONES**. Unable to find funding for his work in America, he moved to Paris in 1980. How Kramer got reeled into this half-baked, self-indulgent, post-apocalyptic, French sci-fi fiasco — with a feisty beauty fleeing across a futuristic landscape, aided by a mysterious loner — is anyone's guess. Did the poor guy lose a bet to a young Luc Besson?

Sometime in the future, the planet's surface has been poisoned and civilization is a fucking mess. Above ground, it resembles a huge gravel pit. Below the earth, it's all industrial mazes and tacky Euro-nightclubs, with humanity's remains dressing like a blend of **MAD MAX** and Klaus Nomi. In this underground city, Anna (Agnès Soral) witnesses the murder of a fellow prostitute/best friend and is prepared to testify against this killer, who happens to be the brother of sweaty, powerful pimp Walter (Richard Bohringer, from **DIVA** and **THE COOK, THE THIEF, HIS WIFE AND HER LOVER**).

Obsessed with shutting up this whore, Walter dispatches thugs led by frizzy-haired psychopath Nelson (**THE PROPHET's** Niels Arestrup) and Anna tries to escape. But just as her last hope runs

out, she accepts a lift from a tow truck driver named Diesel (Gerard Klein) and heads into the rocky wasteland with her muleated, makeshift protector. We get some vague sexual tension between the pair, old grudges with their pursuer, a pit stop at a crumbling old diner, plus Diesel and his bad-ass truck always at the ready to rescue her. Meanwhile, the wealthy ruling class over-uses this conflict. Sounds confusing? Try actually watching this crap!

Working from a script by himself and French novelist Richard Morgue, Kramer was definitely out of his comfort zone here, and seems incapable of stringing together a coherent scene. Even his perfunctory attempts at an honest-to-goodness action sequence end up staggeringly dull. Embracing every penny-ante, end-of-civilization cliché — except at half-speed and with twice the pretentiousness — its performances are either wildly over-the-top (Bohringer) or bland blank slates (Soral), the cinematography is dark and dreary, plus there's a throbbing, sub-Moroder techno-soundtrack. Someone obviously expended a fair amount of effort on its production design, but what good are a handful of cool visuals when your overall film is so disjointed, amateurish and bloated (despite being only 79 minutes long)?

### THE ANGEL AND THE WOMAN [L'Ange et la Femme] (Video Screams; 1977).

A shot rings out, an injured woman tumbles down a snowy rural hillside and a strange man carries her limp body back to his home. So begins this enigmatic Canadian fantasy from Quebec writer-director Gilles Carle (**THE RAPE OF A SWEET YOUNG GIRL**). Strange, sensual and unapologetically artsy, the film is in black-and-white, most of it takes place in a snowbound farmhouse, there's a minimum of dialogue and plenty of gratuitous nudity (courtesy of Carole Laure, who'd already given arthouse audiences an eyeful in **SWEET MOVIE**), plus one of the two leads — played by singer-musician Lewis Furey — is literally an angel.

Our shaggy-haired rescuer is Gabrielle, who lives in the middle of nowhere. And once we get a close-up look at this young woman, we realize she's dead, with bullet holes in her eye and bare breast. That is, until his smoky breath heels her wounds and brings this beautiful corpse back to life. Without any memory of her past, Gabrielle cares for this lost soul, finds syringes in her possession and discovers that her name is Fabienne. They play music together, frolic about in the snow and make love, with Gabrielle occasionally rambling about life and death, and Fabienne breaking out when he finally confesses his little resurrection stunt.

It's initially just the two sharing this remote house filled with grotesque artwork and taxidermied animals, but visitors eventually stop by — his chauffeur, an elderly couple, and a dinner party with so-called intellectuals (including a pre-**SCANNERS** Stephen Lack). Its already-filmy story begins to spin out of control in the final half-hour, when Fabienne recalls her old life (while inexplicably causing trees and a bird to burst into flame?), but her pursuit of the truth behind her violent "dormie" leading to fiery revenge, big city paranoia and (since this is a Canadian effort) a bumper of a conclusion.

What's the point to all of this? Simply to be dreamy, esoteric and unflinchingly pretentious, as far as I can tell. More importantly, it's to lovingly capture Laure dancing, posing, relaxing, and parading around topless. There's gorgeously stark cinematography by Francois Protat (**WEEKEND AT BERNIE'S**), plus Furey's songs and inappropriate background score are only slightly crappier than his acting. Shot for only \$35,000 at Laure's Quebec farmhouse, the director and actress were actually a couple for a time, which explains Carle's preoccupation with her naked body, and Laure's uninhibited willingness to flaunt it for his camera. Laure first met Furey during this production, with the two soon marrying and continuing to work together on stage and film, with Furey directing her in his Leonard Cohen-penned, 1985 musical-fantasy **NIGHT MAGIC**. The pair also starred in Carle's 1980 Cannes Film Festival opening night selection **FANTASTICA**.



starring  
**CAROLE LAURE and LEWIS FUREY**

Original music by Lewis Furey  
French with Eng. Subtitles





## TWO GENTLEMEN SHARING (Video Screams; 1969).

Most films set in swinging streets London centered around Cernaby Street, but this sex-'n'-race steeped feature by director Ted Kotcheff (*WAKE IN FRIGHT*) gives us a more distinctively colorful glimpse into that era. Though not as racy as you might expect for an American-international release (e.g. the film these gentlemen share isn't a woman, it's an apartment), the story is laced with groovy ambience and racial tensions, but as scripted by Evan Jones (*FUNERAL IN BERLIN*), this adaptation of David Stuart Leslie's 1963 novel ends up more of an offbeat character study than a compelling drama.

Despite being a highly-educated British scholar, proper young Andrew McKenzie (Hal Fredrick) has problems renting a decent apartment — because he's also black! That is, until he meets white ad man Roddy Pater (*DECLINE AND FALL OF A BIRDWATCHER*'s Robin Phillips), who needs someone to share the rent on his posh pad. The notion of black/white roommates seems insignificant nowadays, but here it leads to shock (the downstairs landlady is aghast at having a "Negro" residing above her), surprises (Roddy finding Andrew's sexy "colored" girlfriend, played by *THE TOUCHABLES*' Esther Anderson, lounging on his sofa) and new experiences (ironically, while Roddy embraces black culture, uptight Andrew doesn't dig the scene).

Their story lacks much focus though, with already-mentioned Roddy flipping for blonde brat Jane (20-year-old TO SIR, WITH LOVE-outie, Judy Geeson), who hangs out in black nightspots. Meanwhile, Andrew deals with everyday racism, is accused of being an "imitation white man," and reaches his limit when "nigger" is finally tossed about. There's also a nagging question about Roddy's sexual leanings, since he often sets off others' gaydar!

Honestly, it's difficult to give a damn about either flatmate. Andrew has a stick up his ass, Roddy is a rich white guy whining about his problems, and neither actor has the chops to transcend their flaky characters. Geeson is always a welcome presence though, exuding a tough girl-next-door quality while looking hot in her array of mini-skirts. The supporting cast includes Norman Rossington (*A HARD DAY'S NIGHT*) as Roddy's humorously loutish colleague and Ram John Holder (*Porkpie in the UK* show *DESMOND'S*) as a predatory queer. A big stand-out is the cinematography by Oscar-winner Billy Williams (*WOMEN IN LOVE, GANDHI*) who, in the film's coolest scene, captures the energy of a Jamaican "jump up" in London's Finsbury Town Hall, along with ska tunes like *The Maytals*' "54-46 (That's My Number)," Anton Ellis & the Flames' "Rock Steady," plus a steel drum stage performance by Les Flambeaux.

## TEST OF FAITH (1987).

Imagine FOOTLOOSE, except with mostly first-time actors, a public access-sized budget and, instead of dancing, a strong-willed teenager fights for his belief in the Bible! Tackling the "controversial" topic of teaching evolution, this 55-minute Christian propaganda flick was produced by Madison, Alabama-based Olive's Film Productions, who were earlier behind the idiotic anti-rock-'n'-roll distaste *ROCK: IT'S YOUR DECISION*. With



## Two Gentlemen Sharing



John Taylor returning as director, it lacks their previous outing's camp value and instead smother's its viewers in doggy, sanctimonious melodrama.

It's the first day of college for devout farmboy Taylor Mitchell (Wayne Gray), who has a scholarship to study physics at "one of the most reputable schools available" (even though the place looks like a dirty county college), far from his God-fearing, whitebread family. Straight-arrow Taylor arrives at school in a white shirt and tie, with a Bible at his belt bedside, and trouble begins when his first class is taught by a smug know-it-all named Dr. Heinlein (David Robey, who earlier played the title role in John Taylor's inspirational drama *COACH*). He requires all of his students to believe in evolution (humors), makes light of the "mythological concept of a supreme being" (I can't argue with you there) and sports a clearly Satanic van dyke beard.

Poor Taylor needs to maintain a 3.5 G.P.A. to keep his scholarship, but he decides to remain inside his religious little anti-science bubble, the kid could be on the next bus back home. Fearful that Heinlein (who mocks religion as "an outdated fairy tale") is "trying to tear out his faith by the roots," Taylor consults his trusty Bible for answers, stubbornly refuses to believe his textbook, bickers with Heinlein in the middle of class, and submits assignments that instead reflect his own personal beliefs. Taylor even invites some school pals to spend the weekend with his gratingly-pious 'family, doing term chores and going to church. Worst. College. Road trip. Ever!

Shot at Athens State College (Athens, AL), its miserably unscripted amateur cast tries their best, while Douglas K. Davies' leaden script only preaches to the choir and makes pompous windbag Heinlein an easy target. Plus the most preposterous wish-fulfillment sequence is saved for last, when Taylor's Christian term paper is so incredibly moving that it makes Heinlein's small atheist heart glow three sizes that day. But seriously, with so many pinhead school districts spinelessly capitulating to right-wing zealots and adopting the pseudoscience of creationism, this type of horseshit is more repellent than ever. It's no wonder the US educational system is currently ranked 17th in the world, because we've allowed the inmates to run the asylum.

## THE BIG SCORE [a.k.a. A Ton of Gress Goes To Pot] (Just For the Hell of It; 1972).

The ads for this film's re-titled, 1973 re-issue made it look like a typical biker romp, but it's not even close. Yes, the story includes a few supporting bikers, but they don't show up until halfway into this low-budget crime-caper across the Mexican border, featuring inept smugglers, a shitload of grass, plus some wonderfully loopy digressions. Writer-director Tom Hanson (*THE ZODIAC KILLER*) definitely knows how to kickstart a drive-in flick, with a rural shack full of guys rudely awakened by Mexican Federales who promptly gun them all down. So what are the authorities after? A missing ton of pot with a street value of a million bucks (and that's when joints sold for a measly dollar each).

When slick entrepreneur Mike Shaw (Hal Reed) learns where exactly in Mexico that ton of grass has been stashed, he recruits a quartet of old friends for an insane scheme to hide the marijuana in an unmanned, uncontrollable hot air balloon, then send it aloft and let it drift over the border to the US. Hey, what could possibly go wrong? Once in Mexico, these halfwits get high off their own stash and initiate a jail break, plus

four armed black guys (led by Tom Johngann, from Greydon Clark's *THE BAD BUICK*) show up on their motorcycles, searching for the same weed, and begin tracking our crew across the Mexican wasteland. There's plenty of gunfire and action, as well as unexpected humor, plus you've gotta love a film where everyone is a sleazy bastard who's only out for themselves.

What makes the film memorable is how Hanson jazzes up his simple plot with some truly screwy sequences: on their drive to Tijuana, the smugglers pick up hitchhiking musicians, who rock out on the back of their moving truck; we encounter a group of hungry, pathetic American hippies, wandering the desert and begging for food (with one of the bikers telling 'em to "get a job"); after running out of gas in the middle of nowhere, comedian Doodles Weaver suddenly pops up as a traveling peddler; and (best of all) a stoned campfire conversation turns into a hallucination with the guys dressed in Nazi officer uniforms (!) at a Hitler rally, followed by a decadent, fraulein-filled after-party. Yowl! This shit goes on for six minutes! Toss in the weird-ass comic finale and you'll definitely be wondering who ditched Hanson's coffee. On the technical side, there's cinematography by Bob Birchall (*BUCKTOWN*) and a soundtrack by '60s jazz composer John Neel, who wrote the trippy tunes "Freakin' on the Freeway" and "A Ton of Grass," and chose "America the Beautiful" as a brilliant accompaniment for the marijuana-filled balloon launch.



**DIRTY WEEKEND [Mordi e Fuggi] (Video Screams; 1973).**

Its storyline might embrace such heavy subjects as crime, kidnapping and sex, but this lightweight comedy caper by Italian director Dino Risi (PROFUMO DI DONNA, the original SCENT OF A WOMAN), is most notable as the first and only pairing of Marcello Mastroianni and Oliver Reed, who take radically different approaches to their roles.

Marcello stars as philandering pharmaceutical exec Giulio Borsi, who ditches work for an afternoon rendezvous with gorgeous mistress Danda (18-year-old Carol André, THE BLOODSTAINED BUTTERFLY). Unfortunately, a trio of bank-robbing anarchists — fleeing from the cops, wanted for murder and led by Oliver Reed's Fabrizio — take Giulio and Danda as hostages. Although the situation might sound suspenseful, these crooks are a peculiar bunch who stop at a crowded roadside restaurant for a sit-down meal, despite a convoy of police on their tail, and create a full-blown media frenzy. After ditching their unwanted followers, the group finds a place to crash for the night — an old mansion owned by a loopy, wild-haired ex-General (Lionel Stander) — and it's time for this mix of Capitalists and Communists to eat, drink and bond, with Danda succumbing to Fabrizio's brutish, drunken charisma.

It's all fairly absurd, with Mastroianni lacking any restraint as this tumbling coward (e.g. when Borsi makes an escape attempt, he callously leaves Danda behind), and it's no surprise that Giulio's family isn't enthusiastic about paying a ransom for this spineless schmuck. On the other hand, bushy-mustached Reed plays it straight, as if he was unaware (or, in a drunken haze, had simply forgotten) that this was a broad, biting comedy, with his bullying character bringing the only danger to these criminal shenanigans. Co-stars include Nicoletta Machiavelli (NECROPOUS) as hardcore feminist Sylvia and Bruno Cirino as weapons expert Raoul. The script by Risi, Ruggero Maccaro (Ettore Scola's A SPECIAL DAY) and Bernardino Zapponi (DEEP RED) is unsatisfyingly half-baked and there's little subtlety to Risi's direction, with the comedic moments coming up limp, its class-driven subplot falling flat and the only bit of reality coming from its potent climax. Well shot by cinematographer Luciano Tovoli (SUSPIRIA, TITUS), at least the film gets points for presence, by nailing the news media's rabid obsession with juicy crime stories.

**MORBO [Morbidness] (Video Screams; 1972).**

Newlyweds pick the wrong honeymoon destination and soon deal with paranoia, trust issues, out-of-control tempers, and an unwanted interloper in this lightweight Spanish psychodrama courtesy from director Gonzalo Suárez. It stars a pair of popular local singers, early in their careers — Victor Manuel, making his film debut, and 20-year-old Ana Belén — with the two marrying the next year (and, after angering the brutal Franco regime with their political beliefs, briefly forced into exile).

Diego and Alicia go directly from their own wedding to a car with a small, hitched caravan. They've chosen an unusual "camping" honeymoon getaway — parking their trailer in a secluded clearing in the middle of a forest — and they initially brook playfully, make love and lounge about in colorfully mud, plastic blow-up chairs. Beautiful Alicia is spontaneous and emotional, but "boring economist" Diego is more grounded, which leads to crazy arguments or abruptly smashing all of their wedding gifts, and for the film's first three-quarters, it's just these two. If not for the grim prologue — featuring a crumbling old house, scurrying rats, a gun, and a cryptic conversation — we'd never guess that real danger awaits.

As the days pass, increasingly-neurotic Alicia is convinced someone's spying on them. Meanwhile, their water supply is mysteriously emptied, their car's windshield wipers are turned on, mistrust grows between the two, plus their once-spotless honeymoon-cottage-on-wheels is soon filthy and bug-ridden. In the final 20 minutes, Alicia treks through a burnt-out section of the woods, finds a rundown old farmhouse and meets... **BONNIE AND CLYDE's** Michael J. Pollard? Playing a reclusive "hombre de la casa" who lives with his crippled wife, Pollard sports a beard and black leather pants, is only on-



screen for five minutes, but sparks the film back to life. What a weird gig! Did Pollard wander onto the set while vacationing in Spain and Suárez offered the Oscar nominee an impromptu day's work?

Is the script making some half-assed statement by juxtaposing the shallow, brokering, modern lovers with this rural couple, who've experienced true pain and loss? Or is it simply a tedious variation on the 'young campers meet forest crazies' sub-genre, with REPULSION-esque touches? Either way, it takes far too long to get there and the results are mediocre at best. At least Belén's fans must've been happy, since the lovely singer spends much of the film in a bikini and stripes out of her wedding gown and down to her undies in the middle of a busy gas station.

**FANTASIA CHEZ LES PLOUCES (1971).**

French filmmakers have a well-deserved reputation for making gaudy, unfunny comedies, and that proud tradition continues with this pathetically misguided adaptation of the 1956 comic-crime novel "The Dialect Biker" by American author Charles Williams (whose work later became the basis for DEAD CALM and THE HOT SPOT). With a new title that's roughly translated as "Fantasia of the Idiots," director Gérard Pirès (TAXI) preserves the book's main characters and random plot snippets, but jettisons just about everything else in favor of broad, grating comic schlock.

On the run from the law, conman Doc Noonan (Jean YVES, LE BOUCHER) and his young son Billy (plus, inexplicably, a penguin they grab along the way) split town in their Mustang convertible and pay a visit to Doc's hillbilly-bootlegger brother Sagamore (Lino Ventura, ARMY OF SHADOWS). The area resembles a Euro-Dogpatch — Sagamore wears farm overalls over his red longjohns, a filthy neighbor carries around a pig, another is building a makeshift ark out of garbage, two bumbling cops keep smashing up their patrol cars, and Sagamore's super-potent moonshine wilts flowers instantly.

A city mobster also turns up, accompanied by ditty blonde Carolinne (THE TALL BLOND MAN WITH ONE BLACK SHOE's Mireille Darc), an exotic dancer who enjoys spontaneous strip teases, breaking into song and topless dips in her diamond-encrusted swimsuit bottoms, which the Noonans and a variety of equally inept crooks are keen on stealing. Amidst the occasional shooting, murder or musical number, Carolinne (again, topless) gets lost in the swamp, a \$500 reward is offered for her safe return, everyone in the county turns out, and it blossoms into a huge, makeshift carnival — a cartoonish vision of American over-commercialization complete with food vendors, a stage show, cowboys, a cross-burning(!), plus a brief appearance by Darc's then-current lover, Alain Delon.

Full of staid characters who're continually shouting at each other, this leader force reeks of desperation. Ventures, in particular, does not look comfortable playing the yoke. At least the production has a vaguely interesting visual appeal, thanks to production designer Piero Piccioni (L'AVVENTURA, THE 10th VICTIM) and cinematographer Edmond Rostand (THAT OBSCURE OBJECT OF DESIRE, THE TRIAL). Intriguing for its first few scenes, simply due to its wrongheaded novelty, the remainder is insufferably tedious and the only thing that could've made it worse would've been a Jerry Lewis cameo.

**SOUL HUSTLER [a.k.a. The Day the Lord Got Busted] (Just For the Hell of It, 1973)**

Fabian Forte managed to parody his 1950's teen-idol stardom (with hits like "Turn Me Loose" and "Tiger") into a credible '60s acting career that paired him with John Wayne and Jimmy Stewart. By the early-'70s though, Fabian was posing for a Playboy spread and stuck in drive-in schlock such as this loopy message-movie from writer-director Burt Topper (THE DEVILS 8). Shot in 1971 (with the working title THAT LOVIN' MAN JESUS), copyrighted in '73, and not released until '76, its exploitative mix of drugs, money, sex, and (particularly) religion gives this low-budget effort an engaging goofiness.

Matthew Crowe (Fabian) is a long-haired, bearded drifter with a tragic past, traveling the backroads of America in his beat-up truck, screwing any chick he can smooth talk into the sack, and looking for new ways to hustle



up a quick buck. Stopping at a religious revival tent, Matthew effortlessly miks cash from the congregation with a faux-pious sob story, with an enterprising preacher (Tony Russell) spotting his financial potential by targeting a younger, groovier crowd.

Soon Matthew is dressing in sackcloth and sandals, crooning religious-rock tunes with his electric guitar, calling himself the "Son of Jesus," and suckering in gullible followers by the thousands. An album is released in record time, and voila, this grass-smokin', dope-shootin', whore-fuckin' phony is an instant superstar! Unfortunately, all the fame and money in the world can't stop him from being a dickhead. So when junkie Matthew begins whining for a fix and skips out on his handlers, will his uncontrollable behavior destroy this holy cash cow? Or can the love of commune-babe Helena (Nai Bonet) help Matthew change his self-serving ways?

Fabian really commits to his huckster role, and while this San Diego-ensued tale is patently ridiculous, its *FACE IN THE CROWD*-style cynicism keeps it all strangely enjoyable. Matthew is such a fuckwad that any moral lessons feel wonderfully hollow, plus when we finally get flashback to the early trauma that destroyed Matthew, the results are unintentionally laughable (as is its stupendously overwrought climax). Along with cinematography by Alan Stensvold (*THUNDER ROAD*) and loads of forgettable music, the supporting cast includes Larry Bishop (Joey's kid) as a Vietnam vet hitchhiker who befriends Matthew, radio icon Casey Kasem is his sleazy, mustachioed, jowly manager, while belly dancer turned singer-actress Bonet (*NOCTURNA*) is so terrible that she winds up making Fortie look all the more talented.

#### ACCUMULATOR 1 (Akumalor 1) (All Clues No Solutions; 1994)

An ordinary guy becomes privy to the powers within him and the threats that surround us all in this rollicking Czech Republic fantasy from director Jan Svěrák, who won the 1997 Foreign Language Film Oscar for *KOLYA*. Once the story gets rolling, it takes off in wonderfully imaginative directions—as if *THE MATRIX* was filtered through the surreal sensibilities of Czech gems like *WHO WANTS TO KILL JESSIE?* or *THE GIRL ON THE BROOMSTICK*.

Prague everyman Oida Soukup (Petr Forman, son of Milos) is exhausted with his sad, ordinary life, but after being found unconscious in his home and hospitalized, he meets Fisárek (Zdeněk Svěrák, the director's father, who also co-wrote the film), a mysterious healer who diagnoses this lethargic young man with "total loss of energy" and encourages him to try New Agey nonsense, like touching trees or wooden park benches and even a Tancitric orgy. But when Fisárek begins throwing bursts of energy halfway across the city and Oida learns to power a light bulb in his bare hand, the film shifts into flat-out fantasy, fueled by one inspired concept.

You see, there's an alternate dimension which resembles a vast, chaotic TV-studio and whenever someone appears on a television program, their doppeleganger appears in this bizarre world, where they interact with fictional creations—cowboys, Indians, fairy tale characters—and siphon off their real world twin's energy, with television sets becoming a deadly threat that drain one's energy! Soon it's all-out war, as Oida arms himself with assorted TV remotes, dodges parasitic televisions and concocts a harebrained plan to put an end to this danger. There's also a touching love story with shy Soukup falling for Anna (Edita Brychtová), a hot dental hygienist whose deceased father was one of Fisárek's patients.

The story doesn't always make much sense, but it rarely slows down and maintains a distinctly quirky charm, with cinematography by F.A. Brabec (director of the dark fantasy *KYTYCE*). It's punctuated by stylized visuals (when medics try to resuscitate Oida, we get a needle-inside-the-vein POV, complete with pumping organs, and anyone with a dentistry phobia will cringe at its in-the-mouth, super-sized tooth drilling) and ingenious humor (in this fantasy world, if a character doesn't speak Czech, subtitles magically hover below them), while Brychtová's casual nudity and a slitty Snow White give it an unexpectedly adult edge.

#### POWER MAN (a.k.a. The Power Within) and THE NIGHT RIDER (Video Screams; both 1979)

ABC-TV put the best possible spin on a pair of failed pilots by filing their Friday night, May 11, 1979, programming with a three-hour block of third-rate action fodder. First up was *POWER MAN*, an Aaron Spelling produced dud about an ordinary dude with electrical super powers, which hoped to lure in viewers with its low-rent science-fiction premise, since once-popular shows like *THE BIONIC WOMAN* and *MAN FROM ATLANTIS* had run their course.

Cocky daredevil pilot Chris Darrow (*THE BROOD*'s Art Hindle) maintains a lifestyle of cheap thrills and hot chicks (including Karen Lamm, spouse of Beach Boys' Dennis Wilson, as one of his fairground floozies), accompanied by grease-monkey bud Bill (Joseph Ranslow). But after being struck by lightning before the first commercial break, Chris acquires super-strength and can shoot blue sparks from his fingers. Alarmed by his condition, he pays a visit to his estranged father (Edward Binns), an Air Force General in charge of top-secret tests. Dad also has a long-overdue confession—Chris' mom died after driving too close to a nuclear test while she was pregnant with him. Obviously, it altered his DNA and has transformed him into a human super-battery!

DALLAS' Susan Howard plays requisite scientist-babe Dr. Joanne Miller, who invents an implanted device (resembling a high-tech wristwatch) to help control Chris' powers, plus a power-recharge pad that could double for a pricy tanning bed. When a pair of wealthy, government-secret-stealing scumbags (Eric Braeden and *VOYAGE TO THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA*'s David Hedison) get wind of his abilities, the rest is strictly by-the-numbers—Miller is snatched, the General's assistant (BEWITCHED's Dick Sargent) is a spy, Bill must conquer his fear of flying, Chris busts his life-support switch, et cetera.

First off, this is one lame hero. The most "super" he gets is knocking a gun out of someone's hand with a bolt of electricity, and everyone is so busy saving Chris' energy-depleted ass during the finale that the villains get clean away! The script is crammed with stock characters and hacky complications, there's barely competent direction by John Llewellyn Moxey (*THE NIGHT STALKER*), and the production looks even more threadbare than usual—as if even its financiers were dubious from the get-go about the idea's potential.

Only marginally better, *THE NIGHT RIDER* is a convoluted, vengeance-fueled period piece that kicks off in late-1800's New Orleans and eventually turns into a fourth-rate white Zorro (mixed with a little Bruce Wayne family trauma). Written by the prolific Stephen J. Cannell, who'd already helped create his like *BARETTA* and *THE ROCKFORD FILES*, it's overly talky, never builds up any momentum and squanders a lot of fine character actors.

Orphaned as a boy, young Chock Hollister is taken in by a wealthy, childless widow and grows up to be respected Sir Thomas Earl (*DARK SHAD-OVS'* alumnus David Selby). When his adopted mother passes, Thomas bids adieu to his plantation and, accompanied by trusty manservant Percy (Percy Rodrigues, in a fairly thankless role), seeks long-simmering vengeance. And while Thomas might seem like a posh gentleman, when forced into a duel, he'll grab a handy foil and leap about like a caffeinated Errol Flynn.

Once in Virginia City, Thomas is determined to find the bastards who gunned down his family and stole their silver mine. These murderers (played by Harris Yulin, George Grizzard and *BONANZA*'s eldest Cartwright son, Pernel Roberts) are now the richest men in town—the Sheriff, a banker and a potential Governor—so Thomas doubles down on his "minding dandy" act and insinuates himself into their high society, with his parents' greedy killers smelling a wealthy rube. By day, Thomas sets up a long con involving a new-fangled process to turn a mine's worthless waste materials into pure silver; by night, he dons a mask and all-black wardrobe, in order to rob from the rich.

The cost includes 22-year-old Kim Cattrall as Regina Kenton, the banker's daughter, who flirts with Thomas despite his cartoonishly lopsided prattling about opera and poetry. Anthony Herrera is her jealous beau, and *THE GREEN HORNET*'s Van Williams appears in flashbacks as Thomas' father, as does 7-year-old Sydney Penny (*PALE RIDER*) in her acting debut as his little sister. The teleplay's hackneyed plot twists are obvious, its finale feels rushed, plus it drops numerous hints about a sinister group called The Thad (which would have obviously been the crux of future episodes). Director Hy Averback (*I LOVE YOU, ALICE B. TOKLAS*) and cinematographer Steve Poster (*DONNIE DARKO*) get their best to give it a modicum of style, despite its backlist artificiality, but the big stumbling block with both films are their bland leading men. Hard to believe, Selby and Hingle manage to make David Hasselhoff look positively profound, and watching these two dullards once a week would've been torturous.



He's been the perfect husband. But now some unknown danger is threatening their happiness. And, suddenly, she realizes the man she married never existed.



## The Death Of Me Yet

Starring Doug McClure, Rosemary Forsyth, Darren McGavin and Richard Basehart

A World Premiere ABC Movie of the Week  
9:30-10:00 PM

### THE DEATH OF ME YET (1971)

1970's telefilms usually tackled genres like horror, sci-fi, suspense, and soap drama, so this ABC "Movie of the Week" espionage thriller was a pleasant change of pace, with more twists than usual for TV-movie fare. Based on a novel by Whit Masterson (a.k.a. Robert Allison "Bob" Wade, whose work with H. Bitt Miller was earlier adapted into *KITTEN WITH A WHIP* and *TOUCH OF EVIL*) and directed by TV-movie mainstay John Llewellyn Moxey, it's centered around an undercover Soviet operative hiding in the US. But unlike the current FX-series *THE AMERICANS*, this was made when the Cold War was still hot, so any Russians had to be unequivocal scoundrels.

When we first happen upon Doug McClure's character during the knock-out prologue, he lives in a perfect vision of small-town America. But in truth, his home of "Middletown" is located smack-dab in the middle of Russia! The place is actually a training facility for spies, where they learn to act like Americans. He even has a hot young "wife" played by Meg Foster! Most importantly, he's just received a long-awaited assignment to infiltrate the United States.

Several years later, McClure (with a little gray brushed into his temples) is wealthy Florida newspaper publisher Paul Towers, complete with a pretty, unsuspecting wife (Rosemary Forsyth) and a lavishly-decadent home. But Paul starts to sweat when he's offered a government gig that'll require a thorough background check, with pre-KOLCHAK Darren McGavin turning up as a hard-assed US agent who's always searching for Reds. On top of all that, someone's trying to kill Paul!

Towers' mysterious past becomes clear midway through, but in order to make him sympathetic (heck then, you simply couldn't have a loyal Commie as a lead), the story gets even more contrived, with Paul happily retting out his Soviet handlers in order to save his swanky American lifestyle. The fact that Towers prefers dull Forsyth over far-hotter Russkie Foster is also a clue that the guy's a moron. McClure (who started on *THE VIRGINIAN* and *SEARCH*) was perfect for TV — a blond, bland, unthreatening hunk, but lacking much emotional depth. Thankfully, McGavin is always fun, even playing a humorless government hack, along with Richard Basehart as an evil K.G.B. bigwig and Dena Elcar (MacGYVER) as Paul's brother-in-law. Although the plot eventually begins to drag, complete with an annoyingly open-ended finale (in case producer Aaron Spelling turned it into a weekly series), its paranoia-biased premise still provided plenty of prime-time entertainment.

### HONKY (Just For the Hell of It, 1971)

Though marketed like typical exploitation, anyone expecting hard-hitting thrills was probably disappointed by this fairly low-key interracial teen romance. But I certainly wasn't! Based on Gunard Sotberg's novel "Shelia," it has a lot more going for it than the blunt ad campaign would have you believe. Continually shifting gears, one minute it's a love story, then it's about the generation gap, the next it concerns drugs, eventually it's a groovy road movie, and it concludes with a burst of grim violence.

After blonde jock Wayne Divine (screen newcomer John Neilson) spots lovely black chick Shelia Smith (Brandie Sykes) getting high during a pep rally, the pair are soon playfully romping about together, under the opening credits. But while straight-laced Wayne is nervous about the judgmental stares they get when holding hands in their Midwest town, free-spirit Shelia is more intent on rebelling against her rich, ultra-conservative father by purchasing a kilo of grass. Where will she get the \$200 though? Smitten Wayne happily empties his savings account for this babe, with Lincoln Kilpatrick (*THE OMEGA MAN*) turning up as Shelia's grass connection, the psychodelically-attired "Fabulous Traveling Shows."

The story occasionally veers into melodramatic directions, as Wayne joins thrill-seeking Shelia for



one misguided decision after another — running off together, eluding the cops, naively handing out "thank you joints" to drivers who give 'em a lift — but it's only in the final 10 minutes that the script embraces rougher territory, when our two-tone lovebirds run into Elliott Street (WELCOME HOME, SOLDIER BOYS) and Matt Clark (BRUBAKER) as vicious, relentless rednecks.

Neilson is handsome yet quite wooden, but the real star here is Sykes (graduating to her first lead after small gigs in *GETTING STRAIGHT* and *THE LIBERATION OF L.B. JONES*) as our lovely yet highly skittish mix. The supporting cast includes William Marshall (*BLACULA*) as Shelia's straight-laced physician father, HAPPY DAVIS' Marion Ross as Wayne's mom, John Fiedler (the voice of Disney's Piglet) as the principal, John Hilarian (*MAGNUM, P.I.*) as a bus station attendant, plus COOLEY Higham's Glynn Turner in his film debut as a sailor who flirts with Shelia. No fly-by-night production, it features solid direction from William A. Graham (who later helmed award-winning TV-fare like *GUYNIA TRAGEDY* and *THE AMAZING HOWARD HUGHES*), cinematography by Ralph Woolley (*THE STRAWBERRY STATEMENT*, *THE MACK*), plus a swingin' score by Rashida Jones' dad, Quincy

### SEASONS IN THE SUN (Video Screams; 1986)

Back in 1973, Winnipeg-born singer Terry Jacks topped the charts with his melancholy "Seasons in the Sun," which sold three million copies in the US. Few remember that one-hit-wonder Jacks also tried his hand at acting in this odd, low-budget, rural adventure, with Jacks playing a thinly-veiled version of himself. Shot in 1979, it wasn't until '86 that this feature premiered on Canadian TV, but by then Jacks had shifted his interests from music to the environment, and the film was met with universal indifference.

Jacks plays moody music superstar Terry Brandon, who's first seen cavorting about the Canadian wilderness — cooking a fish, hanging out on his boat, and swimming while naked in a rustic bathtub, as "Seasons in the Sun" plays in the background. Then he's jetting to New York City for a sold-out Madison Square Garden show and meetings with sycophantic agents, only to end up rushed to a hospital. One coma and trippy hallucination later, Terry is diagnosed with a rare disease that means blinding headaches and a 50/50 chance he'll be dead in 18 months!

Forced to confront his own mortality, Terry pensively wanders Central Park, dumps his Manhattan girlfriend (*THE OCTAGON*'s Carol Bagdasarian, daughter of songwriter Ross Bagdasarian, who created Alvin and the Chipmunks under his stage name, David Seville), quits the music business, and returns to quiet British Columbia. Alas, Terry's peacefulness doesn't last long. Enter Keith Slatery (Canadian-born Oscar-nominee John Ireland, who only has five minutes of total screen time), a spy-type guy who breaks into a high-tech facility, fends off frogmen and runs into Terry. When Slatery goes missing and his sexy, concerned daughter Cathy (Kathryn Wirt, *COCAINE WARS*) show up, the two explore the area together.

After getting my hopes up during this enjoyably goofy opening, the film severely stumbles once Terry returns home for this boneheaded mystery, packed with pretty nature photography, couple of inept night sequences, budding romance, and Jacks' one-note performances. Its lone bright spot is a seelyy spoof played by EVERY WHICH WAY BUT LOOSE heavy John Quade (who's now a Christian, anti-New World Order nutcase). Meanwhile, the leafless script leaves the viewer in the dark 'til the very end, when characters come clean about hokey top secret documents, Russians and the C.I.A., while our lead's potentially deadly condition is simply forgotten about. Blandly directed by Canadian TV producer An Soodor, it's an ill-conceived, sloppily-produced video project.

### STAY TUNED FOR TERROR (Extraña Invasión) (Video Screams; 1965)

Emilio Vieyra became Argentina's top cult director thanks to offbeat exploitation like *THE CURIOUS DR. HUMPP* (*La Venganza Del Sexo*) and *THE DEADLY ORGAN* (*Piccer Sangriento*), but one of his more imaginative efforts was this sci-fi outing about the insidious, hypnotic power of television

Based on a story by Les Rendelstein and Philip Kearney (who later penned Paul Bartel's PRIVATE PARTS), and starring American tough guy Richard Conte, this inspired feature never made it to the US and didn't premiere in its homeland until nine years after it was shot.

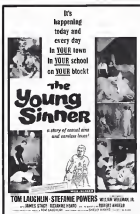
A strange interference disrupts the usual television broadcasts in a handful of sets, with viewers inexplicably mesmerized by these trippy, wavy lines. The problem spreads across the city, with people going into permanent trances, frozen in front of their TVs, or children acting like they're addicted to the television after their parents turn it off. Conte plays Steve Jameson, a no-nonsense, Department of Communications official investigating this mysterious occurrence, but his approach clashes with expert physician Dr. Maggie Conway (Venezuelan actress Anna Mizrahi); while he suggests using electroshock treatment on these catatonic, she prefers shooting up little kids with drugs!

Has some fiend discovered a way to weaponize television? It certainly seems like it, as frustrated parents smash their sets; soldiers go door-to-door; warning the populace about the dangers of television; non-infected adults get pissed at their government and begin to riot; and (during the film's creepy highlight) in the middle of the night, hordes of zombie-like children

talk to the streets in their pajamas, searching for any working television! Shot around the El Palomar district of Greater Buenos Aires, the conclusion (involving a chemical spill and dangerous plants) is seriously muddled, plus I got a bit confused when highly-decorated Army officers from Washington suddenly show up, ordering everyone about and threatening to declare martial law. Was this Spanish-speaking, obviously South American city actually supposed to be the US? Conte doesn't have a whole lot to do—dodging nosy reporters, fiddling with 'high-tech' monitors, taking sinister phone calls from a potential suspect, yet finding time to flirt with the comely Doc—Ms. Mizrahi is rather generic (two years later, the 28-year-old actress became the third wife of 66-year-old Actors Studio founder Lee Strasberg), and Veyra herself plays a pivotal supporting role as TV repairman George.

#### THE YOUNG SINNER (Netflix Streaming: 1961).

Six years before Tom Laughlin premiered 'Billy Jack' in THE BORN LOSERS, his sophomore attempt at directing, scripting, producing, and starring in



his own feature (following 1960's THE PROPER TIME) was a self-important dirge that mixes young love, teen angst, taboo sex, alcoholism, and football. Lensed in 1960 and the first in a ditched 'We Are All Christ' trilogy, this leaden morality lesson went through several title changes—from AMONG THE THORNS, to LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON, until it was finally labeled THE YOUNG SINNER for its 1965 premiere. Pay no attention to its sensationalistic title though, because this is a trite, b&w drama with Laughlin dispensing one of his typically one-note, overly-intense performances. It even opens with him screaming in the middle of an empty church ("your priest is a pig") and vandalizing the joint.

Teenaged Chris Wotan (28-year-old Laughlin) is the school football hero, but he's also a troubled, short-tempered delinquent. And when he confesses his laundry list of sins to a Priest, it's flashback time! Saddled with a drunken son of a father, Chris worries that he's destined for the same fate. When he's belittled by the head coach, Chris blows his top and could get expelled if he screws up one more time. Plus he's quick to cheat on longtime girlfriend Ginny—first bedding a girl from the rich side of town, and later screwing a jaded nymphomaniac ("I can't stop the ache inside," she pleads) in a church mezzanine. Of course, this delinquent is then con-

foundered when Ginny breaks up with him. Despite all signs to the contrary, the script ultimately tries to convince us that douchbaggy Chris is a 'pure and decent' person, and although his life is in turmoil, the boy can be redeemed.

Shot in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, the production looks quite slick, with much of the credit undoubtedly going to cinematographer James Craibe (THE CHINA SYNDROME, ROCKY). Meanwhile, Laughlin lives up his sappy storyline with bizarre throwaways, like Chris buying an old fire engine and taking friends on a joyride as the opening credits roll. Unfortunately, whenever Tom attempts to emot, he displays all of the obvious mannerisms of a third-rate James Dean impersonator. The exceedingly clean-cut supporting cast includes James Stacy, Chris Robinson (THE CYCLE SAVAGES) and William Wellman, Jr. as Chris' rowdy, irresponsible buddies; future-director Jack Starrett as their football coach; and 18-year-old Stefanie Powers (HART TO HART) in her first major screen role as chaste Ginny, who's believably peeved at Chris' moody bullshit. Although some of its outer trappings might've been considered mildly risqué for its era, its core is strictly self-righteous drivel.

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**KIM NEWMAN; London, UK.**

**THE SHOW OF SHOWS (1929).** A genre which blossomed in the immediate aftermath of the JAZZ SINGER, and then disappeared — but for the occasional patriotic, WWII morale-booster and odd items like ZIEGFELD FOLLIES — was the cram-all-the-stars-on-the-roster-into-a-studio-revue picture (e.g. Universal's KING OF JAZZ, PARAMOUNT ON PARADE). This was from Warners, the studio which had given the world talking pictures — though it has to make do with a skit about Sid Silvers impersonating Jolson, which suggests the new medium's biggest star wanted no part of this. It opens with curtains parting as someone goes to the guillotine, then has host Frank Fay show up to handle the intro — with interruptions. A few dances observed from the back of the theatre suggest how overwhelmingly strange theatrical spectacles like this must have been on stage — tiny figures conglomerate into multi-limbed beings, and dancers do regimented routines on a slope or ledges so the whole academy frame can be filled with them. Mostly, it's what we now think of as novelty turns: a sketch with singing screen villains (Bull Montana, Noah Beery, et al.) as pirates joined by a 1929 vaudeville band (i.e. white folks in evening dress) who claim that they do to music what pirates did to other ships, a jokey song about whatever happened to the Floradora Boys (the female leads from the turn-of-the-century hit show



Dolores Costello, Douglas Fairbanks Jr., Lupino Lane, Ted Lewis, Patsy Ruth Miller, Lee Moran, Chester Morris, Jack Mulhall, Ben Turpin, Lorena Young, and Rin-Tin-Tin. Written by Fay and J. Kern Brennan, with probably other uncredited hands than Shakespeare's. Directed by John G. Adolfi.

**BRETT TAYLOR; Wartburg, TN.**

**THE STREETS OF L.A. (1979).** THE STREETS OF L.A. deals with one woman's attempt to get justice. Justice being, in this case, reimbursement for slashed tires. Real estate agent Joanne Woodward buys brand new steel-belted radials, only to see them slashed soon after. The police can't do anything, as the culprits are minors, so the middle-aged divorcee demands their names and addresses from the police sergeant and takes to the inner city in search of payback. It's sort of like DEATH WISH, a movie for white people who feel threatened by crime in the inner city. Only instead of exciting gun violence, we get a lot of arguing. Watching Woodward stand on a porch, hands on hips, demanding money for tires, is not really the stuff of great drama. In fact it's pretty dreary. The tense highlight of the first hour, when Woodward gets sprayed with a water hose, is not a great help. The story is uninvolved enough that, unlike most movies that claim to be based on true stories, as this one is supposed to be, you can actually believe it's sort of true. One of the boys is a good student whose father makes him pay his part for the tire damage. But overall, this movie doesn't present what you'd call a flattering portrayal of Mexicans in the United States. Mexican machismo is the main culprit here, with honest hard-working parents unable to control their angry, defiant youths. For a 70s TV-movie, it demonstrates a surprising amount of cursing from the Spanish exclamations "Pinchi buey!" ("Fucking asshole") and "Chingal!" ("Fuck!") to English ones: "Goddamn waiter!" and "Dirty bastard!" There are token nods to the hardship lives of illegal residents, but mostly this movie is an excuse to get white people — white women mainly — to cheer as one of their own refuses to put up with harassment at the hands of foreigners. Woodward is certainly ordinary all right, with her perm, station wagon and polite consternation. Everything about her says "preacher's wife," maybe, or "Tupperware party." As her boss, Robert Webber brings a little more color with his glib cheerfulness, big bachelor pad and a swinging seventies shirt. When our heroine goes into hysterics in a restaurant kitchen, you begin to think she's off her rocker, as opposed to just a proud woman who's had enough and won't take it any more. When she runs through the slums of East L.A. and gets roughed up by a couple of angel dust-smoking winos, it is easy to think of her as foolish rather than proud. One of these burns is played by an uncredited Miguel Piñero, the most acclaimed Puerto Rican-American author to date, and it's sobering to realize that even an acclaimed post-playwright still had to accept a minor degrading part like this, though this may have been due to personal shortcomings as much as racial stereotyping. The heartwarming finale finds Woodward and tire vandal Fernando Allende (a big romantic star in his own country) coming to an understanding, and it's an agreeable enough conclusion to almost make the movie seem palatable, until you recall how boring it's all been. Also with Isla Vega and Pepe Serna.

**SAVAGE DAWN (1985).** Lance Henriksen plays an intense but noble loner with the name Stryker, and what better name for a fierce men of action? Henriksen heads the desert town of Agua Dolce, which is almost entirely populated by weirdo bikers who bully the few innocent people with florid dialogue and low-grade fighting. These bad dudes, all clad in outrageous getups, sport colorful names like Pig Iron, Zero and Joyboy. And what name could be more ironic for a rough town than Agua Dolce (Sweet Water)? Ooh, they clearly put some thought into this. The good people include George

Kennedy as Henriksen's war buddy from Beirut or somewhere, an ex-weapons designer guy named Tick (he knows what makes things tick, you see) and his retarded son. Tick and Stryker share a hearty laugh as they reminiscence about blowing a guy up with a bomb made of tin cans, nails and pig dung. "That was a time," laughs Kennedy, with a joyful smile. "You and I brought flaming hell to a lot of towns over the years. Just once I'd like to bring some hope." And the way the music suddenly swells over this dialogue, you know they will. The town is not necessarily post-apocalyptic, but is completely lawless nonetheless. Why the good people stick around and hang out at the local bar, where they're sure to be terrorized, is not easy to figure out. Karen Black is the local sneaky slut, and watching her swing from a tank turret, it's hard to believe she was only a few years from doing prestige projects like THE GRASS IS SINGING and COME BACK TO THE FIVE AND DIME, JIMMY DEAN, JIMMY DEAN. Fans of tough guy movies will enjoy seeing the likes of Bill Forsythe and Mickey Jones doing their badass bit, while the older ones, particularly western fans, will be surprised to see veteran character actor Leo Gordon pop up as a sheriff. Even playing a hero, with hair dyed youthful blonde, Henriksen radiates nothing but pure intense menace. Richard Lynch pops up as a perverted priest and incredibly, looks relatively wholesome compared to the craggy Henriksen, who, in spite of playing the lead, receives sixth billing in the opening credits and gets his name misspelled "Henricksen" in the end credits. This movie, with its campy dialogue like "I can suck-start a Harley" and "I'm your worst nightmare. Come true. Ha ha ha!", was clearly not meant to be taken seriously by anyone with an average IQ or better, and at fifteen minutes it might have been an amusing trifle, but at full length it loses your attention pretty fast. It takes over an hour to get to the brief, unexcited highlight, when comedian Sam Kinison, just on the verge of fame and bigger movies, pops up as a born again barber who unwisely insists on witnessing an unwilling biker and gets his throat cut with a straight razor. Kinison, a former evangelist in real life, ditches his usual screaming bit and plays it straight, even while dying or singing "Amazing Grace," and the result is freakin' hilarious. The finale, with Henriksen's absurdly straightfaced posturing, Black's shrill shouting and tenk cawling, a stuntman being set ablaze, and an explosion or two, is indeed ridiculous, but unfortunately it's not quite the end, as we still have a fist-punchin' epilogue in an abandoned oil refinery, allowing Lance to show off his chest and grimace away. SAVAGE DAWN was apparently the last directorial effort from the maker of TOX WITH SEX AND SILENT MADNESS. No great loss, really.



MIKE SULLIVAN; Mountaintop, PA.

**FLODDER IN AMERIKA!** (1992) America isn't great at embracing pop-culture that isn't its own. Most of us fear accents and find subtleties to be exhausting and complicated. Even when we do allow foreign pop-culture into our lives it's marginalized and eventually absorbed into the ghettos of geek culture. But as subcultures as our cultural isolationism may be and as much as it has prevented a lot of us from discovering something truly fantastic, it has also protected us from experiencing things like **FLODDER IN AMERIKA!** For the uninitiated few, the Flooder series was a popular film franchise in Holland that spawned three movies and eventually a long-running TV show. The first film — **FLODDER!** — was a slob vs snobs comedy about a vile, white-trash family (dubbed the Flooders) who are forced to relocate to an upscale suburban neighborhood as a part of an ill-advised social welfare program. Inexplicably, the film was a massive, record-breaking success that led to the even more profitable **FLODDER IN AMERIKA!** In the sequel, the Flooders are relocated to New York City as a part of a cultural exchange program and are mistaken for Russian dignitaries in spite of the fact that two of them are children and they're clearly speaking Dutch. (Incidentally, I can't tell if this is a genuine plot-hole or a swipe at the perceived stupidity of Americans.) From there, the Flooders get into all sorts of crazy mischief as they break a whiskey bottle off of a dog's head, steal milk from a baby and set a blind beggar on fire. What incoherent request! It's hard to see what Dutch audiences saw in these oddly paced, meandering films. Why would anyone embrace a movie that thinks it's clever to give us a white doctor named Dr. Black and a black doctor named Dr. White? How could the Flooders be so beloved when they're so deeply unlikable; especially when the characters lack a distinctive personality to counteract their contemptibility? Apart from the fact that one of them is an older woman who smokes cigars, another looks like a seamy Brain Setzer, yet another has a huge pair of boobytits, and two of them are children



a single fart gag. Considering **FLODDER IN AMERIKA!** is the kind of film where characters eat out of the garbage or have their penises accidentally lopped off by overworked surgeons, the temptation to fill the movie with an ever-present, cacophonous wall of farts had to be overwhelming.

**GOIN' COCONUTS** (1978). Donny and Marie don't deserve your hatred. They don't deserve your scorn. They don't deserve to be called 'Dumny and Mareek' by *Mad* magazine in 1978. Faithful disciples of the Black Goat of the Salt Lake with a Thousand Young (or Mormonism, as it is known today), they are the only two people Paul Lynde didn't greet by grinding a lit cigarette into their cheeks. They are Osmonds; they mean us no harm. But no Osmond is infallible and even though Donny and Marie would never intend to hurt the public at large, it happened anyway when they made **GOIN' COCONUTS**. In the film, Donny and Marie got involved in all sorts of shenanigans and jet-skis excitement when a panicked gangster gives Marie a diamond necklace. But like all gifts that are given by panicked gangsters, this comes with strings attached and it isn't long before Marie is pursued by something that resembles a Muppet fused together with a sexual predator in the matter transporter from **THE FLY** (a typically overacting Kenneth Mars). Eventually, the film ends



involved with this notice the disquieting nature of their relationship? Didn't Morris realize he made a film where a famous brother/sister singing duo awkwardly flirt with each other for 90 minutes? Is this why he's dead? But the most disappointing thing about this film is that it's neither a little bit country nor is it a little bit rock and roll. And apart from the vague promise of quiescence, isn't that why people watch Donny and Marie in the first place?

**BOUKEN! ROCKBAT AND CHIBIRAKUN** (All Clues No Solutions; 1975 / 1970). I really do not want to be yet another person that points at Japanese culture and calls it weird. Not because it's a boring observation or that it smacks of arrogance but because I suspect that Japan looks at our culture, rolls its eyes and says something similar. You know there's more than one person in Tokyo who doesn't understand Fonzie and are slightly disturbed by his Christ-like ability to heal aging jukeboxes. Yet as much as I hesitate to label Japanese culture as weird, I still don't understand it. More specifically, I don't understand why most Japanese children's programming must combine costumed, puppet-y oddballs with the most grotesque elements found in the body-horror genre. As befuddling any TV show produced by P Productions (the studio that brought you **SPECTREMAN**), **BOUKEN! ROCKBAT** looks like it was bankrolled by pen-handlers but it's also endlessly entertaining and addic-

tive. The show revolves around the exploits of a robotic bat that glides through the air on an umbrella that pops out of his skull. In every episode the bat is terrorized by a fox with an impressive Rottweil Fingers inspired mustache who wears a single boxing glove. With a running time of only two minutes and 30 seconds, there isn't much room for things like character development or even a basic plot, so most episodes are devoted to grainy footage of people in decaying, frowny-faced, Disney On Ice costumes attempting to gouge each other's lifeless eyes out with oversized thumbtacks or uplifting ballads about the majesty of flying robots. Occasionally, this pattern is broken in every other episode when the fox is given a new weapon by an angry rain cloud which he either uses to murder other animals or to scare the bat to such a degree that he runs home to hide in his bed, shivering. Throughout this series you get the sense that P Productions could have saved a lot of money if they just turned the concept into a cartoon but I'm glad they didn't because the sight of jittery man-animals besting each other with mallets loses something once it's animated... Speaking of animation, **CHIBIRAKUN** boasts one of the most delightful animated credits sequences ever made, as a family of aliens and their pet kangaroo/dog/platypus dance the Charleston, toy around with malfunctioning contraptions and use a fishing rod to look up each other's dresses. But once the credits sequence ends so does the fun and laughter, because once the alien family is placed in the harsh, unforgiving world of live action film, they're revealed to be hideous monsters. Looking like a cross between a tadpole and



a fetus, the aliens have large penis-like horns that protrude from the tops of their heads and seem to be perpetually twitching. Additionally, they appear to be suffering from Rosecoia and their faces are covered with a greasy sheen. The youngest wears bucket-y, low-slung overalls that reveal his chilling lack of genitals. They are pure undistilled terror made worse by the fact that they exist in a more than vaguely fetishistic world where living rooms are dominated by an oversized, nipple-like decor, milk is dispensed from the breast (not an udder, a human breast) of a robot cow whenever its tail is yanked and

the youngest is occasionally strapped to a chair — not unlike the one Malcolm McDowell was strapped to in *A CLOCKWORK ORANGE* — and his head is brutally bonked by a large silver piston that drops out of the ceiling. And that's just the beginning. I haven't even discussed the floating shrimp in a three-piece suit with glowing red eyes that stalks the family's pet. Basically if you're going to watch CHIBIRA-KUN or BOUKEN ROCKBAT, I'd suggest you get a baker's dozen of marijuana drug sticks or blocks of ACIDSLUD and just huff it through a rag until it all makes sense. (Right? I enjoy drugs just like you!)

#### ADAM GROVES; El Segundo, CA.

**HARDCORE ACTION NEWS (2002).** If you can take another frazzled media satire, a subgenre already done to death in NETWORK, NATURAL BORN KILLERS, SERIES 7, et cetera, then you might enjoy this 20-minute short, made under the auspices of the American Film Institute. It's about an ethically questionable TV news program called Hardcore Action News. The program, presented complete with elaborate computer animation and hilariously cheesy theme music, sets its sights on Lizzy (Lizzy Caplan, a future supporting player in the likes of MEAN GIRLS and CLOVERFIELD), a young pregnant woman on her way to an abortion clinic. She's waylaid by HAN reporter Fallopia Wigglesworth (Angelina Jolie lookalike Odile Corsi), who offers Lizzy a deal: keep her baby and become an experimental subject for a freaky new advertising scheme in exchange for a lifetime of free healthcare. The scheme involves implanting a TV monitor in Lizzy's womb so her fetus can be versed in product-speak before it's even born. An outlandish concept, to be sure, fleshed out with incredibly broad and cartoony humor (there's a character named Hairly Hand and a band called Crotch Rot), but it's all done with surprising élan: the photography is crisp, the copious video animation impressive and the constant shifts between film and video are pulled off with notable skill. There's also an outrageously gory birth-dream sequence that ranks with those of Cronenberg's THE FLY and BABY BLOOD. The finale, unfortunately, is left irritatingly open-ended, we never find out how the fetal advertising gambit works out, with writer-director Niels Alpert seemingly holding out for a sequel, or possibly even a feature version that after a full decade has yet to materialize.

**THE FARE (1998).** A highly original Vancouver lensed concoction that's touching and ominous by turns, and thoroughly unpredictable from start to finish. It features a young boy and girl (Thomas Miller and Robin Anne Phipps) who disembark from a train one day. We initially know nothing about these two apparent orphans, who after loitering around the train station for the remainder of the day enter a cab. The kids ask to be taken to a remote forest locale, and after talking on a payphone with someone who claims to be the older sister of the two kids — and seeing the thick wad of cash they offer as payment — the cab's driver (Don J. McWilliams) reluctantly agrees to their request. But as the trip stretches on the atmosphere turns increasingly unsettling, and the driver comes to suspect that the kids have a hidden agenda — as becomes clear when he finally thinks to examine the money they gave him, which turns out to consist of a twenty dollar bill wrapped around a mess of scrap paper. In relating this twist tale, writer-director Neil Every displays an impressive grasp of tone, with the poignant opening giving way to TWILIGHT ZONE-ish apprehension that in the final scenes becomes something else entirely. The overall structure is somewhat problematic, proving as it does on a rather jarring viewpoint shift (from the kids to the cabdriver and back), but the film is nonetheless quite haunting in its own highly idiosyncratic manner, and lingers in the mind like a particularly vivid dream.

**KING KONG 1990 (1990).** This 23-minute cinematurge by underground auteur Robert Howard (SKIN WALKER) is simply one of the craziest damn things you'll ever see. It's NOT about King Kong, with that title emerging, apparently, from the fact that the soundtrack includes "King Kong" by Denzil Johnson, whose songs take the place of dialogue and sound effects. There's no narrative to speak of, just a lot of polysyllabic madness involving an assortment of spastic freaks. Among the latter are g-string wearing twin brothers connected by tied-together hair, jumping and twitching in an apartment that looks like the Red Room of TWIN PEAKS crossed with the spaceship interior of FORBIDDEN PLANET; the twins wind up in the lobby of the building, where naked ladies cavort, slides appear from walls and a woman gives the twins an empty snap box. Also featured are a bevy of gravity-defying dancers wearing various animal masks (identified as



"Ghouls" in the end credits) who fight and bleed in a vast enclosure filled with floating glass platforms. What any of this "means" I have no idea, with the most coherent element being the "FUCK JESSE HELMS" slogan that appears at the end (and now dates the film considerably). The whole thing, in any event, is amazingly elaborate and extraordinarily well visualized, creating a fully realized surreal netherworld that would make David Lynch proud. The one drawback, I'm sorry to report, is the soundtrack by Mr. Johnson. Robert Howard deserves credit for showcasing Daniel Johnston long before Kurt Cobain made him famous, but the Johnston tunes played here — "Sorry Entertainer," "I Live for Love," "Don't Let the Sun Go Down on Your Grievances" — simply don't fit the imagery, and indeed frequently overpower it.

**DEATH OF AN ANARCHIST (1998).** Running a little over twelve minutes, this is a powerfully concentrated exercise in minimalist experimentation. It features a severely misanthropic Hispanic anarchist (Alex de la Iglesia regular Ramon Quintero) going mad in a skuzzy big city apartment, conveyed through a striking mixture of live-action and stop-motion animation. The protagonist has a tendency to blather interminably, often into a microphone through which he records his political convictions. It's hard to discern how seriously we're supposed to take his explosive lather, heavily accented rants, which include morsels like "bureaucracy and mass media are killing the human spirit" and "greatness in man either happens or it doesn't." The whole thing is deeply hallucinatory in nature, the reason for which we learn near the end: this guy has the ability to transform reality through his dreams, which he demonstrates by making a barking dog and loud TV in the apartment beside his disappear. Later he dreams of the dissolution of a government building and (in the too-apt conclusion) literally removes himself from existence. The film has its share of irritants, but writer/producer/director Bruce Miller handles this bizarre material, with its constantly varying tones and formats, with a fair amount of inspired energy, and Ramon Quintero makes for a compelling (if wildly obnoxious and overbearing) center.

**SEED (1996).** This U.S.G. student project is noteworthy for one aspect: a young Rose McGowan headlines as a scantily clad prostitute. That, I'd say, is reason enough to view SEED, even though it's far from perfect. Written and directed by former Wonderbra model Kann Thayer, it consists of a perpetually depressed Rose moping around a hotel room, beset by audio flashbacks of her abusive childhood (with an off-screen Grace Zabruskie voicing her mother). That pretty much encapsulates the narrative, which includes a hefty encounter with a cigar-chomping, middle-aged John (played by Seymour Cassel, onscreen for about ten seconds) and a much longer session with a nice guy (Kevin Patrick Walls) who may represent a new beginning for the troubled protagonist. The chief attraction of this 17-minute lark is the sight of Rose McGowan in a variety of ways and sluttily outfits, visualized through impressively crisp, professional cinematography. The film is never exploitive in any way, although I believe exploitation is something it could have used, as in common with many student films, it's unbelievably dreary (if the heroine ever cracks a smile, I missed it) and takes itself far too seriously overall.



**BOB MOORE; Lake Havasu City, AZ.**

**HIGHWAY DRAGNET (1954).** An Allied Artists attempt at film noir that missed the mark in more ways than one. The film opens in a Las Vegas bar where a recently discharged Marine, James Henry (Richard Conte), buys Fern Smith (Mary Beth Hughes) a drink, insults her and the pair have a public quarrel, followed by the inevitable kiss. Flash-forward to James hitchhiking on the highway where two Vegas cops arrest him. Yep, the girl is dead — killed with a strap around her neck — and Police Lieutenant Joe White Eagle (Read Hickey, from TV's RACKET SQUAD) will not listen to his explanation. James grabs a gun, runs from the motel, and shoots the tires of one police car while stealing another one. On the highway, James spots two women, Mrs. Cummings (Joan Bennett) and Susan Willis (Wanda Hendrix), standing by a stalled car, dumps the police car and offers to help. He fixes the car and suddenly Mrs. Cummings' dog — a yappy little pain in the ass — is run over because he wasn't "on his leash" (Hmm, his leash?). The trio stop at a classic 1950's desert roadside diner for lunch where Dolly (Iris Adrian, a "brassy blonde" with credits dating back to the 1920's) swaps quips with two cops that show up (oh, the tension!). The burgers are made to go and it's back on the road, only to be stopped at the California State Quarantine Inspection station where, a Marine (Frank Jenks) is being hassled because he is a Marine. There's more tension as an officer checks Mrs. Cummings' drivers license and registration. The three arrive at the Apple Valley Inn where photographer Mrs. Cummings has a contract, with Susan as the model, for a hotel brochure. While at the motel, a stack of newspapers is dropped off with a picture of James and the lead headline "Strap Killer At Large." Word gets out as the hotel manager (Harry Harvey) adds some comic relief with his panicked response to The Strap Killer being on the grounds. James forces the women into a getaway car. Meanwhile, White Eagle has been notified and heads for Apple Valley (making the trip from Las Vegas in just a few minutes — gotta love them '53 Nash cop cars!) and James heads cross-country. The film winds up with a cop being shot, a confession, a kiss, and a future for two love-birds in a flooded house at the Saison Sea. Overall, an entertaining 70 minutes of early 1950's faux noir with some great desert locations along with solid performances by various character actors. Conte did as best he could with the material provided, Hendrix is just plain terrible and Bennett is coldly evil. And the night on the desert scenes are made

**SHOCK AFTER SHOCK...MILE AFTER MILE**  
...in Las Vegas' sleazy nightclub for thrill-kill!



all the more enjoyable by Susan's dress changing color — I suspect more the fault of the b&w film reading to the dress color rather than a wardrobe screw-up.

**DEATH VALLEY (Shout! Factory; 1982).** Before becoming A CHRISTMAS STORY icon Ralphie, Peter Billingsley was Billy in his first big-screen role as a little kid chased by a serial killer (Stephen McHattie) in Death Valley. At age 11, Billingsley shines as the boy sent from New York to vacation with his mother Sally (7th HEAVEN mom, Catherine Hicks) and her boyfriend Mike (AMERICAN GRAFFITI's Paul Le Mat) on a trip to "The West." The film opens with Billy and his Dad (Edward Herrmann) having a day out in New York City. Billy has difficulty accepting his Mom and Dad are no longer together and Herrmann does an outstanding job of explaining how people can no longer love each other but still be friends. At the Phoenix Airport, Sally and Billy deplane and meet Mike. Billy is less than impressed with Mike and becomes one of those sullen kids we all consider to be a pain in the ass. As the trio enters Death Valley, Billy spots a car — a 1958 Cadillac Fleetwood Sixty Special — that bothers him and is relieved when it passes. Meanwhile, at an abandoned mine site three young people are murdered in a RV. Sally, Mike and Billy stop to view the scenery and Billy roams off to the mine and the RV, that he decides to investigate. Tension mounts as he opens doors inside, before Mike shows up and stops him just before he opens the door. Billy also steals a necklace he found in

the RV. During lunch at the Furnace Creek Inn Billy spots an identical necklace around the neck of their waiter (McHattie). On the way to Frontier Town they come across a crash scene and a burning RV. Mike informs the sheriff (Wilford Brimley) they had seen the RV earlier in the day, while Billy tells the sheriff he stole the necklace and hands it over. At Frontier Town, Billy goes exploring the museum, where the killer stalks and takes a shot at him, totally not bothering Billy (after all, the kid is from New York). At the hotel, the killer chases Billy through the grounds and he manages to elude him. Eventually, the twist we anticipated takes place at a "Desert Castle" where Billy proves his prowess with a handgun. Released during the slasher film explosion of the early-'80s, DEATH VALLEY doesn't hit the mark as a slasher flick, but comes across as a pretty good thriller, although the pacing at times is too slow. Le Mat demonstrates why he never really made it big. Billingsley proves his mettle as an excellent young actor and the remainder of the cast does credible work, while dealing with a very poor script.

Lonnie's getting out. After four years in prison.  
Now he wants to find the man who wrecked his life.  
Now he wants to find his sons... and love again.



Starring Dennis Weaver, Agnes Moorehead, Jenny Dean,  
Donna Mills, Sherree North, Don Stroud and Slim Pickens.

**A World Premiere  
Wednesday Movie of the Week 8:30 ☼**

**VIN CONSERVA; New Hyde Park, NY.**

**ROLLING MAN (1972).** This slice of 'Movie of the Week' Americana is something completely foreign to today's audiences, and it's hard to gauge what present-day viewers raised on mindless, \$200 million dreck would make of this little tale (a night 73 minutes) about a loser. Not a loser who busts open his foot locker and grabs a dozen guns to get even. Or a loser who finds a winning lottery ticket. Just a loser, plain and simple. Equipped with young, first-time director Peter Hyams (who made some very interesting films for the first decade of his career, such as BUSTING and the TV-movie GOODNIGHT, MY LOVE, before shifting to more mainstream fare like OUTLAND and 2010) and a top-drawer cast at the top of their game, it's a very satisfying "kick flick." Dennis Weaver is Lonnie McAfee, who totes busted-up cars from the

Smash-Up Derby to the junkyard for a living. His bud Chuck (Slim Pickens) owns the business and wants Lon to become a partner, but he'd rather not rock his own boat. You see, things couldn't be better for Lon. He lives in a trailer (where else?) with "Dixie Cuts" wife Crystal (Linda Gaye Scott, the blonde wench from WESTWORLD) and two young sons, and makes enough cash to put food on the table, with enough left over for beers on Saturday night. That is, until Lon catches Crystal at the local watering hole with a Derby stud (typically high-octane Don Stroud). After a heated exchange where she informs our hapless hero that she's hitting the road, a chase ensues, ending with a fiery crash and the death of his wife, with Lon soon on the bus to the Big House. The charge: murder. There he meets conman Lyman Hawkes (musician and future sausage-peddler Jimmy Dean), who convinces Lon to pass himself off as a C&W star and, for a small fee, tape personal diaries for inmates to send home to their sweethearts. Once out, rough-edged Lon looks up an old friend and wannabe-singer from his Derby days (smoken' Donna Mills). But Lon is determined to find his sons, who, after being turned over to Crystal's grandma (Agnes Moorehead), were given to a family friend for safe keeping (South of Dixie child welfare laws were obviously a bit lax). He hits the road and eventually ends up broke and feeling pretty low in a diner, until saucy waitress Sherree North — who dreams of getting discovered in Hollywood — takes him home with her. By now, Lon is a user and abuser, plus to make matters even worse, Stroud's character has raced his way to the top of the circuit! It seems that for every step forward in tracking his boys, Lon takes ten steps backward, and it's hard to imagine this no-account surviving the hard-knock blows he's been dealt in life... The entire cast is outstanding, with McCleod-era Weaver doing some of his best work ever. Plus watch out for character actor ace Hoke Howell as a prisoner who buys a tunic from Lon. Complete with original songs performed by The Orphanage, not one frame of ROLLING MAN is wasted, and Moorehead doesn't even seem like she's acting — she's that good in what is basically a cameo. The old 'Movie of the Week' is currently lost in the void of forgotten film vaults, but ROLLING MAN is proof-positive that there are plenty of good picks still to be found.

**THE LEGEND OF HILLBILLY JOHN** (Just For the Hell of It; 1973). This is one of those films that, despite the fact that you're not quite sure what it is that you just watched, manages to stick in your craw for a mighty long spell. And speaking of spells — man, this is one wild, head-trip of a movie about spells, witches, 'ugly birds', and Old Scratch himself. Based on Marly Wade Well-man's "Silver John" Appalachian folklore stories, **HILLBILLY JOHN** is a cinematic experience unlike anything else you've ever seen... The story itself is simple enough, told by the team of granddaddy Denver Pyle (**THE DUKES OF HAZZARD**'s Uncle Jesse) and grandson John (Hedges Capers), who're sort of strolling minstrels of the creakybarrel set. And the sight of Pyle rockin' out a tune about Lucifer himself is nothing short of astounding. Although there are many familiar faces making cameo appearances — R.G. Armstrong, Alfred Ryder, Val Avery, Percy Rodrigues — only (the always amazing) Savarn Darden appears throughout the entire film as a dowser. Mean-while, John meanders throughout the Carolina backwoods, warbling tunes about everything from the apocalypse to the man-eating Ugly Bird, which looks like the bastard son of the buzzard from Rankin & Bass' **RUDOLPH'S SHINY NEW YEAR**. And no, I'm not exaggerating. John's episodic adventures include a greedy undertaker (Harris Yulin) confronting a witch (Susan Strasberg), visiting a Voodoo plantation, plus John giving that Ugly Bird a whack on the noggin with his pure-silver-strung guitar, which protects him from evil.

If this review seems confusing, believe it or not, that is exactly the way the film plays out. **HILLBILLY JOHN** was made by a filmmaker who had a strange tale to tell, told it the way he saw it, and any criticism be damned. Directed in a truly unique style by one of TV's great storytellers, John Newland, who helmed episodes of **THRILLER**, **PEYTON PLACE**, **POLICE WOMAN**, and is best remembered for his work on the cult anthology series **ONE STEP BEYOND** (which he also hosted), Newland had an amazing eye and always kept the proceedings moving at a nice clip. As for its performers, all involved deliver memorable cameos and Capers, Darden and Pyle are simply jaw-dropping. There's even a hillbilly honey in the shapely form of Sharon Hensley. Definitely seek it out. Yee Haw!



#### ANNA PUCHALSKI; Jersey City, NJ.

**AZIRIS NUNA** (All Clues No Solutions; 2006). Based on the novel "Segodnya, mama!" by Yuli Burkin and Sergey Lukyanenko, this Russian sci-fi/fantasy hybrid came in the wake of the remarkably successful **NIGHTWATCH**, and while director Oleg Komposov follows that aesthetic, this is very firmly set in the realm of children's cinema. The story centers on archaeologist Sergey, his wife Gayla and two sons Kostik (smart, with glasses) and Stas (tough, obnoxious). But unlike "normal" archaeologists, as one son points out to the other, their father is obsessed with finding ancient space visitors in Egyptian history (a la **STARGATE**). Both of the kids are American-movie precocious. One makes elaborate origami, the other hoards pens, knives and trash in his pockets, and their parents make them learn (spoken!) ancient Egyptian, I suppose because that is the family business (and a handy plot device later). After overhearing their father talk about a mysterious find at the museum where he works, they sneak out in the middle of the night with a stolen set of keys to see it for themselves. Using a butter knife and a spoon, they split a ten-foot-tall stone Sphinx head in half to find a spaceship. Oh, and a mummy comes to life just at that moment and attacks them! They hide in the spaceship — you can see where this is going, right? The pod blasts them into space where they are intercepted by aliens — wacky ones, of course, but more or less friendly. This pod hasn't yet sent the brothers into outer space, but 500 years into the future as well, which explains the floating robot heads, but not why everyone is wearing high school band uniforms. There is, of course, a villain: Shrida looks like a club kid interpretation of a pharaoh, crossed with Cat from **RED DWARF**, making him by far more interesting than the Russian-inspired aliens the children befriended. The Captain of the friendly ship informs the boys that

TONY RANDALL  
DOROTHY STICKNEY, MILDRED NATWICK  
TONY RANDALL, DOROTHY STICKNEY  
and special guest star BORIS KARLOFF

HALLMARK HALL OF FAME  
**ARSENIC AND OLD LACE**  
The loveliest kind of alibi was never so seductive as when it was used by a woman as clever as Dorothy Stickney. About as hot as sugar. See a star-studded, 1940s production of the famous and lively play. Broadway hit! Directed and Produced by ROBERT SCHAFFNER. See it in color.

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with a bill more interesting backdrop (thanks to the source material, I can only assume). Although novelist Lukyanenko is well regarded as a science fiction writer, he's also more prolific than Stephen King (never a good sign; not to mention, he only co-authored the book in question here. Not having read the original book, I can't say if there could have been a better film in it, but there is just enough of interest to make me wish someone had tried.

**ARSENIC AND OLD LACE** (Video Screams; 1962). A Hallmark Cards presentation of the classic play and Broadway hit, this NBC live-telecast production features a stellar cast. While my copy opened with an ad for Hallmark's Valentine's Day product line (introduced by a creepy, winking baby doll dressed up like cupid), this is otherwise a perfectly respectable adaptation of the Joseph Kesselring black comedy Dorothy Stickney and Mildred Natwick play the Brewster Sisters, Abby and Martha, the grande old dames of an ancient Brooklyn family. So mired in the past are they that they still look down on the addition of electricity to their family homestead. They live with their nephew Teddy, who believes himself to be Theodore Roosevelt (Tom Bosley), while another nephew, Mortimer (Tony Randall), who on the outset seems to be the

most sane of the bunch, lives nearby. He's a drama critic and is struggling to come to terms with the fact that he may have to go through with a promise to marry his girlfriend, preacher's daughter Elaine (Dody Heath), despite his concerns about his family's genetic disposition to port mental health. Meanwhile, a third brother lives outside. Nogoodnik Jonathan is a master criminal on the lam. His sidekick, Doctor Einstein (George Voskovec) has given him botched plastic surgery, resulting in a distinct Boris Karloff profile (handily, he's played by the actual Boris Karloff). Mortimer, on his way out to the theatre with Elaine, accidentally discovers a dead body entombed in the window seat. His aunts are quite dismissive about the entire thing, despite his concern. It comes out that they have been at this for some time, taking advantage of Teddy digging "looks" in "Panama" (otherwise known as holes in the basement) to dispose of their homicidal pastimes. The one thing that does shake up these elderly murderesses is Jonathan's return to the house, but they can't seem to discourage him from staying. The thing is, sluggish Jonathan has a body to dispose of tonight as well... While production values are decent for such an early TV-movie, it really doesn't make that much difference, as the entire thing takes place on all of about three sets anyway. The performances are strong and the material is gleefully dark, and speaks to a generation of TV watchers who also indulged in **THE ADDAMS FAMILY** two years later. Tony Randall does a fine job of being the straight man to a host of characters while still maintaining a general feel of loquaciousness. On the other hand, if you are familiar with any production of **ARSENIC AND OLD LACE**, this doesn't cover any new territory except for being the only filmed appearance of Boris Karloff in the role of Jonathan, 21 years after appearing in the show's initial Broadway run. While he performed the role regularly on stage over the years, he was not in Frank Capra's well-known 1941 film adaptation, no doubt the production most of us are familiar with. A novelty, but entertaining still.



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## DRIVIN' WITH SHIRLEY AND NATALIE: A Conversation With Actress

## SHIRLEY KNIGHT

By JUSTIN BOZUNG

As a fan of Shirley Knight and her performance in Francis Coppola's 1969 film *THE RAIN PEOPLE*, it's easy to speculate about her 'Natalie'—still out in the Midwest void all these years later, after the credits have rolled. But what would she be doing? Would she still be driving from town-to-town, searching for whatever she was looking for in the first place? Or did she give that up and head home to her husband on Long Island, to live out her days as a mother and wife? What did Francis Coppola truly envision for her after he faded to black?

With *THE RAIN PEOPLE*, Francis Coppola wanted to say something about the female state of being, as well as changing the way that films were created. He wanted to build a film utopia of artists and storytellers. A place where personal films could be made and the filmmakers wouldn't have to rely on the big money of the studio system to finance them. He wanted to create a new Hollywood, and he almost did it with his muse and star, Shirley Knight.

Over forty years after its release, *THE RAIN PEOPLE* hasn't yet been acclaimed for its emotional cinematography or stream of consciousness editing. Knight's performance still hasn't received its proper recognition, and the film has been ignored for far too long as one of the true kickstarters of the burgeoning 'Easy Rider, Raging Bulls' filmmaking generation.

Knight's 'Natalie' is unforgettable in *THE RAIN PEOPLE*. She's pregnant, emotionally strung out and terrified for her own existence. At times, she is selfish, cruel and reckless—but also motherly and capable of empathy. Natalie runs away from her life in New York via a dusty station wagon to search for herself and ends up cornered in the Bible Belt of the Midwest, with no choice but to endure the deadly wreckage of her decisions. It is a career defining performance, and although 'Natalie' may have been created by Coppola, her heart and soul exists because of the incredible abilities of actress Shirley Knight.

Knight first got her start in Hollywood as a contract player with Warner Brothers. She worked consistently throughout the mid-50s and into the '60s, appearing on TV-series such as *MAVERICK*, *THE FUGITIVE*, *77 SUNSET STRIP*, and *THE NAKED CITY*. In 1961, she was nominated for her first Academy Award for her performance as 'Reenie Flood' in Delbert Mann's *THE DARK AT THE TOP OF THE STAIRS*. Another Oscar nomination would follow in the wake of her heavenly performance in the film version of Tennessee Williams' *SWEET BIRD OF YOUTH* (1962).

Throughout the '60s, Knight would not just be recognized for her rich portrayals of complex, controversial characters in films like *THE GROUP* (1966), *DUTCHMAN* (1967) and *PETULIA* (1968). She would also become known for her theatrical work on Broadway and across the pond in the United Kingdom. She would eventually move to the UK and remain there for many years before returning to the United States.

To date, Knight has been the recipient of a Golden Globe, three Emmys, as well as a Tony Award. She was also unjustly nominated for a Razzie Award for her portrayal of the horny, hippie-like mother in Franco Zeffirelli's Brooke Shields/Spittoon vehicle *ENDLESS LOVE* (1981).



Her characterization is intense and shocking, making *LOVE* a worthwhile viewing experience.

In subsequent years, Knight has continued to work almost non-stop. She has remained busier than many actors in their prime by appearing in quirky genre films like *THE SENDER* (1982), *COLOR OF NIGHT* (1994) and *LITTLE BOY BLUE* (1997), comedies like *STUART SAVES HIS FAMILY* (1995) and *PAUL BLART: MALL COP* (2009), as well as hit films like *AS GOOD AS IT GETS* (1997) and *DIVINE SECRETS OF THE YAKA SISTERHOOD* (2002). Currently, Knight has just wrapped on the shooting of the new Stephen King film, *MERCY* (2013).

**SHOCK CINEMA:** Before we start to talk about all of the amazing films you've been a part of, I'd be remiss if I didn't ask about winning the Tony Award in 1976. What was that experience like for you?

Shirley Knight: It was a wonderful experience. It was for a wonderful play that was called *KENNEDY'S CHILDREN*. I was in Los Angeles, on tour performing the play after having done it on Broadway, and the producer had told me that I really needed to go to the awards I told them that I didn't think I should go, because I didn't think I

was going to win and we were supposed to perform the night of the Awards as well. But the producer told me that I should go, so we canceled that night's performance and I went to New York and I won the Tony. It was very nice.

**SC:** You were born and raised in Kansas. I was curious to know what you were like as a kid growing up there?

Knight: It was a very small town. I lived in a little village that only had thirteen houses. There was one church, one two-room schoolhouse, a grainery, and that's about all there was there. It was before television, so as I was growing up we listened to the radio all day. We used to listen to the opera on Saturdays on the radio, and as a kid all I could think about doing was going to live in New York City and being an opera singer. That was my dream as a kid.

**SC:** At what point did you start to think about the possibilities of being an actress?

Knight: To be honest, I never did. I had never thought about being an actress. Between my junior and senior years in college, I had decided that I needed to take an acting class to help me as a singer. At the time, I was studying music and journalism in college, and I saw an ad in the back of *Theatre Arts Magazine* about a summer acting class at the Pasadena Playhouse in California. I really liked the idea of going to California to see the ocean, and I liked this idea more than taking the acting class, I think, because I was living 1800 miles away from either ocean, so it just seemed like quite an ambition... [laughs] So my parents gave me a bit of money and I took a train out to

Pasadena. I took an extra job out there so I could afford to live while I was taking the course, and while I was there for the summer I decided that I wanted to stay... I was doing a musical scene with some other people in the class and there was an agent there, and after the class he came up to me and told me how great he thought I was. I couldn't believe it. I had no idea if I was good or not. I was just doing what I had usually done with the song I was singing, and I was just being myself.

The next thing I knew, I was being taken around to do tests at MGM and Warner Brothers. I was only nineteen at the time. Both studios offered me what was then a standard six-month contract in which I would be making six hundred dollars a week. I was really intimidated by the people at MGM, so I told my agent that I wanted to go to Warner Brothers, and at the time I had no idea that I'd be working longer than those six months. I just figured that I'd save up all that money and once my contract was up I'd go somewhere like UCLA and get my music degree. But that didn't happen, because in that six months they started to test me out, and I got cast in several small parts in films and on television shows like *77 SUNSET STRIP* and *MAVERICK*. Then a role for a fifteen-year-old girl came up for a film called *THE DARK AT THE*

**TOP OF THE STAIRS.** And even though I was nineteen at the time, I looked like I could be fifteen years old. I looked like a child. So I read for the director, and I got the part and then I was nominated for an Oscar. Then Warners lent me out to MGM for a film that they were doing with Paul Newman, *SWEET BIRD OF YOUTH*, and I was nominated again and I've never been out of work since... [laughs]

**SC: I know! It seems like you just never stopped and you just keep going and going!**

**Knight:** I know! I've been so fortunate.

**SC: But prior to *SWEET BIRD OF YOUTH*, you'd went to New York City to study at the Actors Studio with Lee Strasberg, no?**

**Knight:** No, that came after *SWEET BIRD OF YOUTH*, actually. I went to the Actors Studio after I had worked with Paul Newman and Geraldine Page, and had met Joanne Woodward. I was working with all of these wonderful actors and I started to think about the fact that if I was going to continue on as an actor that I needed to study. Working with them, I realized that these people knew something that I didn't know. They were all very special actors.



Shirley Knight and Rip Torn in *SWEET BIRD OF YOUTH*

**SC: Right, *SWEET BIRD OF YOUTH* is a very New York cast film.**

**Knight:** That's right, and after we were finished on *SWEET BIRD OF YOUTH*, I went to New York and I got into the Actors Studio and we put together an extraordinary production of *THREE SISTERS* that Lee Strasberg directed. George C. Scott was in that as well. As an actor, if you only do films you can only reach a certain level of acting, and you don't go beyond because you don't go through the process. If you do a play, you go through the process. If you're doing a play for six months you have a chance to really understand the character. So I had to do that to continue on.



Barbara Nichols, Shirley Knight and Constance Ford in *HOUSE OF WOMEN*

**SC: I was wondering if you could recall your experience working on the 1959 film, *FIVE GATES TO HELL*?**

**Knight:** Oh, my goodness, that was like one of the first things I ever did! That was a 20th Century Fox film, and it's kind of historic in a way. It was the first film that was written and directed by James Clavell, and I think it was based on some of his experiences fighting in the war. He wrote and directed the film *TO SIR, WITH LOVE* and the mini-series *SHOGUN*. I can't recall now, but I think we shot that film in Malibu. Yeah, that was one of the first things I ever did, I was such a novice at that point... [laughs]

**SC: It's such a strange film. It seems like something that someone could remake today — *R.O.W. girls in the jungle are forced to have sex with their captors to stay alive during the war, and eventually fight back!***

**Knight:** [laughs]... I know. They're all nuns, too! [laughs] I have a story that you'll find very funny. Years ago, I started to get requests from Germany for nude photographs of me. I was thinking, "Wait a minute, there aren't any nude photographs of me! What's going on here?"

I have a friend who sends me DVDs of some of my old TV appearances from time to time — that I've lost or never got a copy of — call me about the time that I started to get these requests, so I asked him, "Do you know why people in Germany would be sending me requests for nude photographs?" He told me that in Germany there is a company that releases old pornographic films from the '60s and '70s. I told him, "I've never done a porno film!" He then told me that the company had renamed the leading actresses

in these films to: Elizabeth Taylor, Audrey Hepburn and for some reason a Shirley Knight! I asked him, "Why me?" He said, "They must have needed an innocent one like the way you were 'Heavenly' in *SWEET BIRD OF YOUTH*." I said that still doesn't explain why I'm getting requests for nude photographs! So, if you Google 'Shirley Knight' you may see this film that features a 'Shirley Knight' in a porno film, but it's not me.

A few months back, another friend of mine was here visiting and we were watching a film, but it wasn't very good, so she suggested that we watch one of my films instead. I didn't want to, but she starts going through this box and finds this

porno film and she says, "I didn't know you made a film in Germany." [laughs] My friend who had told me about it in the first place bought a copy of the film and had sent it to me. It came in the mail and I had forgotten all about it. So when she found it in the box, I had to tell her the whole story about it and she said, "Let's watch it!" [laughs]

**SC: How was it?**

**Knight:** Oh, my god. It's in black and white. There's no sound. It's about these women that get shipped to China in trunks, and the Shirley Knight in it... she looks just like Heavenly! from *SWEET BIRD OF YOUTH*... [laughs] She's got long blond hair and large breasts... which I never had... [laughs] I mean, you can't make this stuff up! [laughs]

**SC: Well, it's one way to keep your name out there, I guess!**

**Knight:** Yeah, I guess. [laughs] Now people think I did a porno film... [laughs]

**SC: Going back to the early Warner Brothers days, how did *HOUSE OF WOMEN* (1962) come to you?**

**Knight:** Jack Warner always wanted to keep his people in line. So after I did *SWEET BIRD OF YOUTH* and got that second Oscar nomination, he decided to put me in two B films. One was *HOUSE OF WOMEN* and the other was a film that was written by Robert Bloch, the guy who wrote Alfred Hitchcock's *PSYCHO*, *THE COUCH* (1962). I was really upset. I didn't understand why he'd put me in those after I had just got an Oscar nomination. At one point I remember going into his office to talk to him about it, and he just looked at me and said, "I don't need another Bette Davis on my hands!" It was a 'get the hell out of my office' kind of thing.

**SC: I like *HOUSE OF WOMEN*. It's got this cool Sam Fullerian *exposé* vibe to it, and the genre is still just as popular too.**

**Knight:** Yeah, it was just like doing a horror film. I just finished working on the new Stephen King film, *MERCY*, and it has just an amazing cast in it. All wonderful actors. I couldn't believe it. That young man, Chandler [Riggs] from *THE WALKING DEAD* is in the film too, and after we'd finish a scene he'd walk over to me and sort of pat me and say, "That was very good, Shirley!" [laughs] It was so sweet. But, horror films are tough, they're very hard to do.

**SC: Going back to *SWEET BIRD OF YOUTH*, I was curious where the character of 'Heavenly' came from inside of Shirley Knight.**

**Knight:** That's interesting... Well, the character isn't as prominent in the Tennessee Williams play as it was in the film, but her tragedy is so much more greater in the play. In the play, they don't really get together, Paul Newman's character is castrated at the end, and [in the film] she has an abortion rather than a hysterectomy. Which is very different because with a hysterectomy she could've never had a child. When [director] Richard Brooks met me, I think he really said that I was the right person for that part. I think he saw my innocence and my blond hair, but I think he also saw that I had a little bit of a cutting edge to me from meeting me that first time. We had an instant rapport and he was really a tough guy

**SC:** I love how Brooks shoots you with that soft light throughout the film. Also, the chemistry that you share with Newman is electric, especially in the scenes with the two of you in the lighthouse. Could you talk a bit about how important it is to have chemistry with the actor you're working with.

**Knight:** Well, I think most actors are pretty wonderful, but sometimes it can be hard if they have problems or whatever. Let me tell you, the first day I met Paul we were supposed to just be rehearsing on the set even though we weren't shooting. Joanne was there. She was pregnant and she was sitting there knitting. I was really intimidated to be working with Paul so I walked over to her, introduced myself and sat down to ask her for advice. She laughed and said, "You should learn to knit. You'll be sitting around a lot." That was her acting advice. Paul walked over and said, "Shirley, we're going to start rehearsing in a minute I think we should go behind this screen here and smooch a bit and get to know each other before we rehearse this scene in the lighthouse." I just turned scarlet. I was shocked. I just couldn't believe it. He was such a joker! Joanne stopped him and said, "Paul, you've just met Shirley. She doesn't know or understand your sense of humor." [laughs] Right in front of his wife! [laughs] It was wonderful in a way, because it really broke the ice. It was a lot of fun... Interestingly enough... You know one of the greatest directors I ever got to work with, and he was a total genius — we did a couple of fun films together — was Richard Lester.

**SC:** Absolutely! I'm a huge fan of PETULIA.

**Knight:** I had, of course, seen both of The Beatles films that he did, and THE KNACK... AND HOW TO GET IT. I love PETULIA. To me it's a perfect film. I loved working with George C. Scott too, we worked so well together. I think it's one of his best

Richard Lester would've made more films than he did. I think he got a bit burned by Hollywood.

**SC:** What about your "Polo" character in PETULIA? Is she still in love with George C. Scott's character, even though they're divorced? After all, they have that bond of having a child together. Are you able to draw a parallel between that situation and your own experiences with your first husband and child?

**Knight:** I just think that as you get older you understand that stuff more than you would've when you're younger. It's no accident that you get better and better with age. There was another actress that was cast as "Polo" before me actually. But they fired her because I guess she just wasn't right for it. I got a call from my agent about the part and they said, "It's a very small part. You only have one scene." So I read the script, and I saw that the scene was the best scene in the movie! I said, "Of course, I'm doing it. And besides, it's Richard Lester. I can't turn this down." So I went up to San Francisco and Richard Lester ended up writing some extra scenes in the film for me.

When we were making PETULIA, I was close friends with Joan Baez. One night she called me and asked if I wanted to go with her to this club to see this woman that was supposed to be incredible. So I asked Richard Lester and George C. Scott if they wanted to come along, and they said yes. They wanted to meet Joan. So we got to the club. It was actually in this basement and that's when we saw Janis Joplin and Big Brother & The Holding Company on stage. We were all just knocked out by them. They were just unbelievable and Richard said, "I have to have them in the movie."

**SC:** How did THE GROUP come to you?

**Knight:** Sidney [Lumet] offered me one of two roles. He said, "You can either play the one who jumps out the window or you can play Polly." I read the script like five or six times and it seemed that Polly was the most interesting, because she changes so much. She becomes a real woman over

course of the story, and she was very sexual too. She has those two affairs. I loved that character. I loved the crazy father and I got to work with some wonderful actors.

**SC:** Had you read Mary McCarthy's book prior to shooting THE GROUP, and what do you think that you brought to "Polly" that wasn't already in the novel?

**Knight:** I hope I made her more complicated. I think she became much more multi-faceted. Because, in a sense, the girls in the book are all a very particular type. So I think what happened with me playing Polly was that she hopefully became more well rounded.

**SC:** After THE GROUP, you started work on a film that featured one of your greatest performances, "Lulu" in DUTCHMAN.

**Knight:** I saw the play in New York City in a little theatre and knew that I had to do that part. So my husband and I at the time took the play to Los Angeles and did it there and it caused all of this



Shirley Knight and director Richard Lester on the set of PETULIA

commotion, riots and we got death threats and what not. It was that time. I decided that I wanted to make it into a film. Somehow we scrounged around and raised some money. We wanted to shoot in New York, but the city wouldn't let us because they thought it would be bad publicity for the subway.

So we went to London and we built the subway car set on a soundstage. We had a director, Sidney Fune, but he then left to do a bigger film, so we used Anthony Harvey, and he was Stanley Kubrick's editor. We did it for twenty thousand pounds and we shot it in a week. Then we took it to Cannes and we won a prize there and got a theatrical release for it. When we were making the film, people were saying that it wasn't going to be seen, that it was too short in length, that it was too controversial. I told everyone that I didn't care. I had decided that I wanted to make this film and that's what I was going to do. After Cannes we took the film to Venice and I won the Best Actress Award. I was so proud of the film. I just wanted everyone to see it. I mean, it's the little film that won't die. It still shows at the Whitney Museum and at the Film Forum here in New York. We're now trying to get it released officially on DVD, because it's just being bootlegged on the internet now. We don't care about making money off it, we just want it to be seen.

**SC:** "Lulu" is a radical departure for you, versus what you had done previously. How did you find that character from within — starting first with the play, and then with the film?

**Knight:** Well, it was awful at first. I swear to god I was going to fire myself. Luckily for the play, I had a great director. Burgess Meredith directed our play in Los Angeles. After about a week of just not being able to get into her and that sexuality and the kind of dirtiness of her, Burgess pulled me aside and said, "Meet me tomorrow at eleven o'clock at the Pink Pussycat." I looked at him and said, "The what?" It was a strip club on Santa Monica Boulevard in Los Angeles. He told me that he was taking me there for a lesson. He was just trying to free me. He even bought me an outfit at one of those sexy lingerie stores. So we met and



Knight and Hal Holbrook in THE GROUP

performances, because it seemed to me that it wasn't such an ordered performance. It seems like it wasn't so planned out. Richard Lester is such a genius because he always tried to throw George before a take so he was always present. Do you remember the cookies scene?

**SC:** Of course. I was going to ask you about that. Was that scene something that was improvised or was it scripted?

**Knight:** As I recall, it was a secret between the two of them, and then it happened. I think one of the reasons why it's so startling is because I didn't know he was going to throw the cookies at me. It was very in-the-moment as it were. I wish

we go into the strip club and there's this woman leaning on the bar who was obviously hung over and she's going to give me a strip lesson. I was really appalled. Her husband, who was the MC for this place, came up to me and said, "She's really hung over, but don't worry. I know all her moves, so I'll be giving you the lesson." So I'm given this strip lesson by this guy and it was so humiliating and horrible, and I think the shock of that forced me to just be ready to do the part, and from then on, I was OK.

Later on, I was getting really sick from eating all those apples, so I asked Burgess if I could just eat oranges for one day. So we were rehearsing and I grabbed the orange and I just started to squeeze it and I'm saying that stuff like "Raghead man..." and the orange was spraying all over my co-star [Al Freeman, Jr.]. I was ruining my clothing and he just became furious. He was yelling at me and at Burgess saying, "Lulu would never do that!" The writer of DUTCHMAN, Amin Baraka, was sitting in the back of the theatre and he stood up and said, "She'd do worse than that, man! She'd do worse than that!" After that I began to have fun with her.

**SC: One of the more interesting facets of 'Lulu' is her clothing. I was wondering if you had anything to do with your costume?**



With Al Freeman, Jr. in DUTCHMAN

**Because it's sexy, but it's also as if she's a bumble bee about to attack.**

**Knight:** Right, that was the idea. I bought that dress for that exact reason.

**SC: DUTCHMAN's cinematography is interesting as well. I love the third-party subjective camera at a distance. There's barely a close-up or two-shot.**

**Knight:** Gerry Turpin was a wonderful cinematographer. Everyone that worked on DUTCHMAN worked for free. That was the kind of support we had. Talk about an independent film. All of the shots that were actually down in the subway — we



Robert Duvall and Knight in THE RAIN PEOPLE

stole those by sneaking an Amiflex camera down there in the middle of the night in a paper bag.

**SC: There's a story that Francis Coppola tells in regards to the origins of THE RAIN PEOPLE, where he says that he first saw you in tears at Cannes and he walked up to you and told you that he was going to write a film for you. I was wondering if that was how you remembered your first meeting with him?**

**Knight:** I don't remember the crying part. But I do remember him coming up to me at Cannes and telling me that he wanted to work with me and that he was going to try to write a movie for me. I remember thinking in my head that he was just saying that, and that people say things but they don't usually happen. I met him in the spring, and in the fall I was in London shooting a film and he called me and said that he'd like to come and see me. He came over and he brought the script. He asked me if I could read it right then and there. I said, "Absolutely!" So I went into the next room and read it and Francis sat in the room and played with my daughter Kaitlin, who was like four or five then, while I was reading it. I read the script and said, "Let's do it!" So we decided to shoot the film in the summer and that he wanted to hire James Caan and Rip Torn. I said, "Great!" That's what happened and, of course, Rip was replaced by Robert Duvall, but let's not talk about that.

**SC: THE RAIN PEOPLE is a film that, I think, doesn't get its due in terms of how it helped change American cinema, compared to other films from that same era, like EASY**

**RIDER. Could you talk about that?**

**Knight:** It was a little ahead of its time, because it was right before the women's revolution of the '70s. It's about a woman trying to find herself. It's a shame what happened to it. It was made under one regime at Warner Brothers and it was released under another, and the latter didn't care one bit about the film. It was just thrown out there.

**SC: For me, THE RAIN PEOPLE is a very complex film. I can't help but feel that there's this sort of parallel between Natalie and your own life because your performance is so emotional. Who was Natalie to you?**

**Knight:** That's a very difficult thing. At the time we started shooting the film, I had left my first husband, and I was pregnant. I had just turned thirty. It was a very difficult time, and I was just making mistakes left and right. I was offered the lead in THEY SHOOT HORSES, DON'T THEY? and I turned it down. Can you imagine? Like an idiot, I turned it down. I was pregnant and I was tired and I was working too much. It was just a very difficult time. I've always worked too much though. I'm exhausted now. [Laughs]

**SC: Was Natalie selfish in some respects, considering what the character does by running away from her obligations?**

**Knight:** I think she was desperate. I think that was what Francis was saying. I think that was happening to a lot of women at that time.

Natalie felt that she hadn't lived yet and she wakes up and she's married, she's pregnant, she's terrified, and she realizes what her life was going to be. She had to run away.

**SC: The brilliant aspect of that character was that she ran away to escape her fear, but effectively took what she was afraid of with her on the road.**

**Knight:** Absolutely! It's like men who have their mid-life crisis and leave their wife and children behind to go off and meet a younger woman to have another wife and more children.

**SC: I read once where Francis said that he envisioned his potential relationship with you before THE RAIN PEOPLE as being similar to the creative relationship that Michelangelo Antonioni and Monica Vitti shared. How does that resonate with you?**

**Knight:** I'm glad to hear that actually. I think what happened with our creative relationship was my fault. I was just going through such a difficult time in my life during the shooting of THE RAIN PEOPLE. I was not myself and I regret that. I wish that things would've happened differently in retrospect, and when I think back about those days I do get sad because we can't go back to fix it. I dropped the ball in the situation.

**SC: In the film, Natalie always refers to herself in the third person. I was curious if that was something that you brought to the character or was that written into the script by Francis?**

**Knight:** I can't remember for sure. When we were rehearsing the film in New York, I can remember talking to Francis about the fact that Natalie didn't feel like herself, like she thought that she was somebody else and it may have come out of that. I can't remember specifics now. But I do feel that way about her.

**SC: What about the production? Was the fact that the production literally moved across the country in a caravan, shooting on location, a challenge to you or was it liberating?**

**Knight:** No, no, I didn't mind that. Things would happen that were very difficult though. I can remember when we were up in the mountains in West Virginia, and there was no air because of the altitude and I would just faint. I was pregnant and I would just pass out. The other actors were getting frustrated with me, but I couldn't help it. So that was difficult, and I was difficult on THE RAIN PEOPLE and I'm not normally difficult.

**SC:** What do you think happens to Natalie after the film ends?

**Knight:** I think she goes home. I think she goes back and has the child. I don't know if she's happy though.

**SC:** In 1971, you shot a film with Jacqueline Bisset in England called *SECRETS*, which questions the sustainability of marriage. I was wondering what your thoughts were on that. When you married for a second time it was for good, so I was wondering what your secret was to maintaining a successful marriage?

**Knight:** Oh, my goodness... [laughs] Well, I miss my husband. We worked together a lot. It's not like anything is ever easy in the sense that we traveled a lot, we had children, we were often in situations where I had to work and he had to work—I was working at night, he was working in the day and we didn't get to see each other—but I think we had a real mutual respect for each other. I think that was the secret. I really admired and respected him as a person. He was a very nice person and no matter who met him, he was able to charm them. He had that Welsh charm. No one was a stranger to him. Literally people today still come up to me and say, "Oh, I met your husband once and he was wonderful." He left us too early and I really miss him.

**SC:** I figured that he was the one that you were supposed to be with in your life; if he wasn't, you wouldn't have changed your name to Shirley Knight Hopkins for a few of your films. **Knight:** Right... I did that until I did JUGGERNAUT (1974) with Richard Lester. Richard came up to me and said, "Shirley, we've got Tony [Anthony Hopkins] in the film. Do you mind dropping the Hopkins?" [laughs]



Francis Coppola and Shirley Knight on the set of *THE RAIN PEOPLE*

**SC:** Could we talk a bit about *THE LIE* (1973), the CBS PLAYHOUSE 90 telefilm written by Ingmar Bergman?

**Knight:** That is one of my very favorite things that I've ever done, and I've been looking for a copy of that for years!

**SC:** Did you get the opportunity to meet Bergman? How did that project come to you?

**Knight:** I did get to meet him. When I was cast though, CBS had considered dropping me and casting a big star, but Bergman went to them and told them that he was a fan of mine. I couldn't believe it. I had no idea. I didn't get to meet him until afterward though, and later he wrote me just

the most wonderful letter that I still have today. It was an incredible story and all that violence, it almost makes you sick.

**SC:** Between *THE RAIN PEOPLE* and *ENDLESS LOVE*, you have this body of work that has essentially gone unseen because of its unavailability. There are films like *THE LIE*, *RETURN TO EARTH* (1976) or *THE DEFLECTION OF SIMAS KUDIRKA* (1978) that may never make it to DVD. Do you think that between those cracks there may lay some of your best work, but it simply hasn't been seen yet?

**Knight:** I don't know. I guess if I had my choice I'd really like to have people see some of the things that I've had the opportunity to do in the theatre. Like my "Blanche" in *A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE* or *KENNEDY'S CHILDREN*, *YOUNG MAN FROM ATLANTA*, or *LOSING TIME*, that my husband John [Hopkins] wrote and that Jane Alexander and I did. I would've loved to have some of that stuff seen by a larger audience.

**SC:** What about *ENDLESS LOVE*? That was a very interesting role for you, no?

**Knight:** Yeah, that one scene in particular, where I'm watching the kids from the top of the stairs was pretty interesting.

**SC:** How did Zeffirelli direct you for that scene?

**Knight:** He really just kept saying to me, "You're looking at them, you're looking at them and you're enjoying them." That was really it. What was funny about *ENDLESS LOVE* was the fact that I took my daughter to the premiere and when she saw that scene where I kissed the boy she got really upset. She said to me, "Mom! That was terrible of you!" [laughs]

**SC:** With *ENDLESS LOVE*, did you ever get tired of hearing that damn song with the success of the film?

**Knight:** Absolutely not! It was a fabulous song. The song was better than the movie.

**SC:** In 1980, you worked on *PLAYING FOR TIME* with Vanessa Redgrave and Jane Alexander, in which you were nominated for an Emmy Award for your portrayal of Auschwitz Lagerführerin Maria Mandel. As an actress, can it affect how you approach your performance if you know that your character is morally wrong?

**Knight:** I think we all have things in us or possibilities of prejudice or what not. When I think about



With Robert Culp in *THE LIE*

you in *IF THESE WALLS COULD TALK* (1996), in addition to films like *AS GOOD AS IT GETS* and *DIVINE SECRETS OF THE YA-YA SISTERHOOD*. That leads me to ask about the business you're in. You've continued to work consistently, but it seems like as actresses get older they're pushed into supporting roles. Why do you think that happens? Why don't we see someone like you or Ellen Burstyn in leading roles, with compelling stories centered around women as they get older?

**Knight:** Well, I don't know. Maybe because there aren't that many parts out there for older women. Sometimes I think also that I have a tendency to do a lot of plays and those take up a lot of time during a year. So maybe, over the years, there were things that I could've done, should've done, but didn't do, like *THEY SHOOT HORSES, DON'T THEY?* I don't know.

**SC:** Of all the young actresses in Hollywood today, who do you think is really great?

**Knight:** Jennifer Lawrence. She's already set the bar so high for young actresses coming up. Did you see *SILVER LININGS PLAYBOOK*? She is incredible, and it's a relief because we've become so used to seeing actresses who really just shouldn't be acting. There are a lot of actresses out there that are just awful, but we won't mention names. Some of them can't even act, but we won't be rude, even though it's fun sometimes... [laughs]

**SC:** After all of the talented directors and actors that you've worked with on film and on the stage, is there anyone you'd like to work with today?

**Knight:** I would love to work with Francis Coppola again. Then also, the director Paul Thomas Anderson. *BOOGIE NIGHTS* was so impressive.

**SC:** Are you ever surprised by the success of something? With all your experience, are you ever able to read a script and immediately know that the finished product is going to be something special?

**Knight:** Sometimes. I feel that way about the project I just finished shooting, called *REDWOOD HIGHWAY* (2013). [CONTINUED ON PAGE 48]

## MAKE-UP, HIGH HEELS AND FANGS: An Interview With Actor

## JON POLITO

By MIKE SULLIVAN

Like most film nerds, there are a handful of movies that — if they just happen to be on TV — will make me drop whatever it is I'm doing at the moment and watch them until the end credits start to roll. *GOODFELLAS* is one, *BOOGIE NIGHTS* is another, and the Daniel Stern vehicle *BUSHWACKED* (1995) is yet another film that never fails to stop me dead in my tracks. Obviously, the irresistible qualities of *GOODFELLAS* and *BOOGIE NIGHTS* need no explanation. *BUSHWACKED*, on the other hand, does. Why would anyone watch a barely released, *HOME ALONE* cash-in once, let alone every single time it appears on cable television? The answer is, of course, Jon Polito. As the corrupt Agent Palmer, Jon is an electrifying contradiction. He's menacing but likable, funny and yet kind of scary. Throughout *BUSHWACKED*, Jon is the only element that keeps you glued to the screen. But there's to be expected especially from an Obie award-winning actor and Coen Brothers' film regular who has managed to upstage the likes of Dustin Hoffman, Jeff Bridges and Billy Bob Thornton. Gented, writing this as a fan, I realize that some of this might come off as a little fawning, but to everyone else out there, let me ask you this. Would *MILLER'S CROSSING* (1990) or *THE BIG LEBOWSKI* (1998) have been the same without the presence of Jon? No, they probably wouldn't. They would still be great films, but they would be lacking one exciting and unpredictable ingredient.

At 62 and with 200 film and television credits to his name (an amazing feat considering that his film career didn't really take off until he was 36), this self-proclaimed fan of Peter Lorre and Charles Laughton isn't that far removed from the brassy, larger-than-life characters he often plays. But unlike those frequently intimidating figures, Jon is a complete sweetheart; a funny, quick-witted guy who was kind enough to sit down with me and discuss his amazing career working alongside such legendary figures as Marlon Brando, Clint Eastwood, Richard Pryor, and *FRIENDS*' star David Schwimmer.

**SHOCK CINEMA:** I guess we'll start with David Mamet's *AMERICAN BUFFALO*. Was that your very first stage production?

Jon Polito: I was getting noticed by *The New York Times* for some off-Broadway stuff I was doing. I did a play called *GEMINI* that was a big hit, but unfortunately, they moved the play to Broadway and took everybody in the cast — which included Sigourney Weaver — except me. So it was a great disappointment. Around the same time David Mamet had written a play called *AMERICAN BUFFALO* and it opened on Broadway in the Belasco Theatre. It was a three character play starring Robert Duval, Ken McMillan and John Savage. It changed the face of Broadway.

They were going to look for understudies. That, I naturally wanted to go in for but I didn't have an agent at that time, but I was freelancing with a couple of agents. So I called them up and

said you got to get me in for understudy. They all said, "No, there's no way you're going to understudy Robert Duval. You're 26-years-old, and Ken McMillan is older than Robert Duval, and he plays a 55-year-old guy." But one agent said, "I'll send you in to read for the understudy." When we went in for the audition, I met the stage manager and he



said to all of us, "Look, we're not going to bother interviewing you. What we're going to do is we're going to give all of you tickets to the balcony to see this play. If you think you have the balls to read for these roles after you see it, then you come back and I'll sign you up after the performance."

I want to say that it was one of the most incredible moments I spent in the theatre. Everybody in it was amazing. I was a street kid from Philadelphia and the sight of these rather stupid people trying to do a con was like music to my ears. So I immediately went back with tremendous confidence and said, "Yes, I want to read for Robert Duval's understudy." So I went in the next day and I read for Duval's understudy and [producer] Joe Beruh took a liking to me but he said they already had someone in mind, could [I] do something with McMillan's role. Now McMillan was a bull of a man so I told them, "Give me five minutes." I went down to the dressing room, put cigarette ash under my eyes to make myself look older and I stuffed my pants to make myself look fatter.

I came back up and read for McMillan's character and I'll be damned if they didn't cast me. I was only 26 years old. It was an amazing acting lesson for me watching Duval, McMillan and Savage.

My relationship with some of these guys turned out rather good. I wasn't friendly with Duval but I got to know Mamet pretty well and Ken McMillan became a friend. Eventually Kenny and I worked together in a movie called *THE CLAIRVOYANT* (1982).

**SC:** Did you ever step in for McMillan?

Polito: No. I never went on. Kenny was a real coke-head and he nearly missed a lot of performances. I remember one time he was so sick and hungover that Duval had a talk with him. Duval said, "I'll go on with Polito, but I would rather Kenny go on instead." Duval really pushed him to go on.

**SC:** What can you tell me about your experience on the 1982 Broadway production *THE CURSE OF AN ACHING HEART*, with Faye Dunaway?

Polito: In that cast was Terry O'Quinn and Paul McCrane, who is a wonderful director right now. It was a really great cast of actors. It was directed by — God rest his soul — Gerry Gutierrez, and I was not fond of his direction. I felt he was very scared about how this play would work out because it was a dream play, a memory play. Faye Dunaway was on roller skates at one point and she had to play a teenager as well as an older woman. It was quite an experience.

**SC:** Do you have any memories from the play?

Polito: One evening, during curtain calls, somebody stood up in the back of the house and they started to applaud a little too feverishly. Almost as if they were frantic. And they started to walk towards the stage. I noticed it and Terry noticed it. I leaned over to Terry as we were clapping, and he looked

at me and I looked at him. The curtain came down and was going to come up on Faye, but both of us went right in front of her to block her. The curtain came up and that motherfucker was right in the front. He could have been a killer. There was no protection. No security. The curtain came down and Faye was upset. She wanted to know why we were standing in front of her. So I had to have a meeting with her in her dressing room. I remember going down on my haunches right next to her as she was applying her cold cream and she said, "What happened there?" and I said, "Well, Faye. Somebody came down to the front of the stage, and Terry and I felt very strongly that you must have security at the front of the stage." She said, "Well, I don't see why. This is the theatre and this doesn't happen." I leaned up to her and I said, "Faye, this is the town where John Lennon was shot." She stopped applying her cold cream, looked down at me and said, "We'll have security tomorrow." It was a wonderful moment.

**SC:** What was it like working with Christopher Walken in the stage production of *MEASURE FOR MEASURE*?

Polito: First of all, let's talk about the year. That was



1979 and I had quite a name for myself. I began the '79-80 season with a play called *EMIGRES*, with Brent Spiner. It was a hold over hit and we got raves. It was not only being written about positively, I was given raves in *The New York Times* and *Sunday Times* articles. In the midst of this when we extended the play, it was interfering with another play I auditioned for and got, *MEASURE FOR MEASURE*. This production was performed at Yale, was directed by John Madden, who went on to direct *SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE*, and starred an amazing cast. All the young Yalies were in it and at that time, you wouldn't have believed who was there — Tony Shalhoub, Geoff Pierson, Frances Conroy, and Christopher Walken.

Christopher Walken was friggin' brilliant. His performance, his cadence in the Shakespeare dialogue was brilliant. But we had a problem. We were about to open and Chris had a fight with someone on the street. Someone made some comment to him and he punched him. Chris is a tough street guy and even though he looked very delicate at the time, I wouldn't mess with him. He was a dancer and he was a fighter. Anyway, Chris punched this guy and he broke his middle finger — his "fuck you" finger — so they took him to the hospital and the pin they used to set his finger was infected. He didn't know this. So, we're getting into previews and Chris' middle finger is getting bigger and bigger, like the biggest hard-on penis you've ever seen in your life. His hand is starting to get discolored and he can't move it. It's bad news. We have to announce that Chris is leaving the play two days before official critics are coming.

So, Geoff Pierson has to move into Chris' role and David Alan Grier — who was in the chorus — had to move into Geoff's role which, I believe, was Pompey, which is the funniest role in the play. The play opens and Geoff does not get good reviews, the poor guy had two days prep to do this performance, Frances gets very nice notices, I get a rave for a fucking paragraph, David Alan Grier gets noticed beyond belief. He told me when we worked together on *BLANKMAN* (1994) that he hadn't really learned the lines at all. He never thought he'd go on. He really put the performance together in a couple days. David Alan Grier is a genius.

#### SC: How did you get involved in the Broadway revival of *DEATH OF A SALESMAN*?

Polito: The word came around in *The New York Post* that [Dustin] Hoffman was thinking of doing *DEATH OF A SALESMAN*. Slowly things started to come out about casting and who would be working with Dustin Hoffman. Then they came out with the news that Melkovich was offered the role of Biff, the son, which I immediately thought would be brilliant casting.

It's now the summer and we don't have any news about whether Melkovich will commit to the one year run on Broadway. Right in the middle of my vacation in Atlantic City, I get a call from my agent saying that they want me to try out for the role of Biff. Now, I've always hated the role of Biff because I never thought I could play the character. There's this one scene where Biff and Happy are talking in the bedroom and Biff says, "You know, Happy, there's nothing as beautiful as a sight of a mare and a new colt on the fields," or whatever the hell it is. I can play that part until it gets to that line and then I just lose the character. I don't know what it is. So I tell my agent, "I can't read for Biff. I can't say the line about the mare and the colt." He thinks



#### Jon Polito and Dustin Hoffman in the film version of *DEATH OF A SALESMAN*

I'm crazy and tells me to get back to New York right away because the audition is tomorrow morning.

So I go all the way back to New York and I put on a hair piece and start to prepare my performance. But I can't do it. I can't get past this one scene in the bedroom. So, anyway, I go in the next day and I am sitting in the waiting room and there are terrific actors like James Woods, who are there to try to take over the role of Biff. In a panic, I turn to one actor, Michael Tucker, and say "Michael, I

can't do this. I don't want to play this part!" And Michael says, "Why don't you just tell them what you want to do?" And then I said, "You know what? You're right." So I go to the bathroom, I pull off my hair piece, and I go back in the waiting room and I quickly start to prepare for the role of Howard.

Now, I've always loved *DEATH OF A SALESMAN*, but I've always disliked the way people have performed Howard, the guy who fires Willy Loman. I felt that in both films — the television version with Lee J. Cobb and the film version with Fredric March — the character was played a bit too arch. Like a silent film villain. I always felt that part should be played differently and it's a part that I've always wanted to play since I was a kid.

So, the casting woman comes out and I run to her and I say, "Look, I can't play Biff." She tells me, "Oh, no, no. They want to see you for Biff." So I said, "You don't understand. I have to read for Howard." She tells me that Howard had already been cast. So I tell her that I have to give this a shot, otherwise I'm just not going to be able to play Biff. So then she says that, "If you can try it with them but [she] doesn't think so." At that moment they call me to go into the theatre and as I walk into the darkened theatre, Hoffman goes storming past me and he is having tough words with the director. As this is happening, I am waiting in the back to go up on the stage. So, eventually, I walk forward past this cacophony of sound, walk onto the stage and I'm raising my hand and saying, "Excuse me, excuse me." They're all still talking,

so I say, "Excuse me! I'm Jon Polito and I'm not going to read for Biff and I just wanted to let you guys know, so maybe I can get out of here? I only want to read for Howard." Everybody stops and I hear Hoffman's voice saying, "What did he say?" and I said, "I can't read for Biff." And Hoffman goes, "You can't read for Biff? Why are you here?" I said, "I want to read for Howard. I can't read for Biff. I can't say there's nothing as beautiful as the sight of a mare and a new colt." And I say this to ARTHUR MILLER, who's in the audience! So Hoffman starts mumbling, walks onto the stage and he goes, "Alright, if you want to read for Howard, let's do it cold." So Hoffman sits with me on the stage and I read for the part of Howard. It is very exciting and we do a wonderful reading.

#### SC: Wow!

Polito: OK. So, after that, Hoffman walks down into the house, walks back on stage and he is looking at my height. Now, I'm getting a little touchy about the movie *TOOTSIE* is that some at the audition where somebody tells Dustin they need somebody taller and he says, "I can be taller." I always loved that line. So, on the stage, Hoffman starts looking at me, looking at my shoes, standing up next to me and he turns to the front of the blackened house and he says to Arthur Miller, [director] Michael Rudman and [producer] Robert Whitehead, "I think we need somebody taller." I'm



#### With Frances Conroy in the Yale production of *MEASURE FOR MEASURE*

about to say I can be taller but I'm pissed off now. So I say, "Thank you all very much, and I walk out of the theatre. I call my agent and I say, 'Look, I'm never going to get this part,' and I go back on my vacation. One week later, I get a phone call from the casting director who tells me that I've been cast as Howard. So I tell her I thought I wouldn't get it. They all agreed if you can walk out on Dustin Hoffman at the audition, you can certainly fire him through a year. The great part about this was that Melkovich then committed to the production. So therefore everybody who read for Biff didn't get the job.

SC: Of course, your work in *DEATH OF A SALESMAN* led to your association with the Coen Brothers.

Polito: Now, let me say something. I'm not quite sure how true all of that is. But this is my interpretation of the story. I know that the Coens saw DEATH OF A SALESMAN, because everybody in New York saw it. But four years later, when they were reading for Johnny Caspar in MILLER'S CROSSING, I just assumed that they had seen it and that's why they would not see me because they thought I was the wrong age and the wrong type. So I'm assuming that's based on the fact that four years earlier I was 150 pounds and — to them — I looked 33. So I was not going to be able to play a role intended for a 55-year-old. Although I got it in the end. [laughs] Had MILLER'S CROSSING not happened, I wouldn't have any kind of cachet. Because that film had become a cult classic and young directors want to work with me because I worked with the Coens.

SC: The Coens really seemed to like you, though. After MILLER'S CROSSING they started to use you as a sort of utility player in their films.

Polito: They did. When BARTON FINK (1991) came up, I wanted to play — quite naturally — Michael Lerner's character but they said no, absolutely not, because it was too similar to the Johnny Caspar role in MILLER'S CROSSING. Francis McDormand was the one who convinced me to accept the part of Lou Breeze — a very

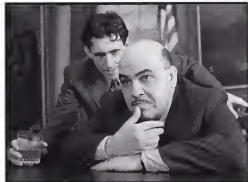


John Turturro and Jon Polito in BARTON FINK

York. This would have been a major deal for me as an actor. But on one of the last nights, the goddamned producers gave New York contracts to every member of the cast in front of me. And then pulled me in the hallway and said, "You're not going." I wanted to kill.

SC: Oh, God!

Polito: As the one producer is giving me this spiel about how they wanted a "bigger star" and "if there's anything [they] can do," I turn to her and say, "Well, I certainly hope you die soon," which is a brilliant line I took from BROADCAST NEWS. And God knows, she might be dead for all I know.



With Gabriel Byrne in MILLER'S CROSSING

small part — in BARTON FINK. The way she convinced me was she told me that it would help my career. And, in fact, it did. It basically turned me into one of those old Warner Bros. studio actors, in that you could plug me in anywhere.

SC: During pre-production on MILLER'S CROSSING, you had a particularly sour experience working on the stage production of OTHER PEOPLE'S MONEY. Do you want to talk about that?

Polito: Well, that was an amazing thing. It was a wonderful play about hostile takeovers. That was probably my best stage performance. I opened this play up — opposite Mercedes Ruehl — in Hartford and we get raves. I mean raves. We had been held over and the play was going to New

York. This would have been a major deal for me as an actor. But on one of the last nights, the goddamned producers gave New York contracts to every member of the cast in front of me. And then pulled me in the hallway and said, "You're not going." I wanted to kill.

SC: Maybe. But that was an awful thing they did. I don't know why they basically made you watch as they handed out contracts to everyone but you.

Polito: It was the most frightening and embarrassing thing ever. But here's the gift of it: I wanted to go with the play even though I had now been on top of the list to be hired for MILLER'S CROSSING, but I was going to choose the play over the film. So what happened was even though I'm bitching about it now, I went off and did MILLER'S CROSSING, which was the beginning of my film career. The good part of it was, after the play opened and

the new lead didn't get rave reviews, the producers asked me to return to the play. So I charged them a shitload of money and I got paid more than I ever would if I never fought with them.

SC: I just want to tell you that I really love that terrible conman you play in THE MAN WHO WASN'T THERE (2001).

Polito: My pansy salesman? I love that guy. That was a wonderful experience, a wonderful role. The first time I heard about that film was when I was doing a cameo in THE HUDSUCKER PROXY (1994). When I was on the set ready to shoot my scene, I asked Ethan [Coen], "Why don't I have a good part in this movie?" And Ethan said, "Oh, we got something for you. Do you want to make a

pass at Brad Pitt?" And I said, "Absolutely!" So he said, "We got this thing called The Barbershop Movie" — we don't know what it's called yet. We'll probably get you to make a pass at Brad Pitt." Now that was in 1994, and by the time the film was eventually made it was no longer Brad Pitt; it was Billy Bob Thornton.

So, anyway, I'm rehearsing my scene with Billy Bob Thornton and the Coens turned and said, "Alright. We got a moment here where Billy Bob knows you're giving him a cruise [What can you do to flirt with him?] I knew they didn't want me to do anything overt like put a hot dog in my mouth. What I could do — and what I've always been able to do as a kid — is blink with my left eye without squinting. It's just an easy blink. I showed this to them and they thought it was very funny. Billy Bob was amazing to work with. Although I never slept with him, because he was sleeping with that Angelina Jolie! So I never got a piece of Billy Bob! But I betcha there's a lot there, that's all I'm saying! Bada-bing!

SC: [laughs]

Polito: But THE MAN WHO WASN'T THERE is the kind of movie I'd like people to see. I'm sorry it didn't become a cult classic, but it is the weirdest of the Coen Brothers films.

SC: THE MAN WHO WASN'T THERE is one of their most underrated films. I particularly love how authentically non-ish the film looks.

Polito: Oh, my God. Isn't [Roger] Deakins' photography amazing? Deakins is a genius. I remember I was kind of snippy with him when I first met him. When I was on the set of BARTON FINK, I chose these glasses for my character that were reflective. They should have been non-reflective, but we didn't get them fixed because I just came on the set a day before. So Deakins was setting up the lighting and we're finally getting around to my close-ups but Deakins is having a bitch of a time of it because the cards he's using to light me are showing up in my glasses. So, of course, I'm giving him the business like [affects a mocking tone] "Barry Sonnenfeld would have been able to film this! Barry Sonnenfeld would have done this! Barry Sonnenfeld would have done that!" Of course, I see BARTON FINK and realize that Roger Deakins is the most brilliant DP in the world.

SC: What could you tell me about your appearance in Clint Eastwood's FLAGS OF OUR FATHERS (2006)?

Polito: I was told not to read for that role because it was a bit part and there was no money involved. But I really wanted to work with Eastwood. So, here's the story with FLAGS OF OUR FATHERS. Just as I was beginning the scene where I'm introducing soldiers at the podium in Times Square, I was told they changed the rank of one of the soldiers. He was now first corpsman or something like that. It was not the line I originally had. Anyway, I was standing on the stage and I'm waiting for action and, of course, Clint Eastwood never says action! So, as I'm waiting, I notice somebody is waving at me and I'm thinking, "What the hell is he waving for?" and I realize that I'm in the middle of the shot. They start bringing these soldiers on stage and I introduce them and they shoot it and it's done. So I thought, "Hey, I got through that!"

Then they moved us off the set because they were going to set up the big shot, where the cameras would dolly through the flags behind the podium as I announce the names of these soldiers to the crowd. When they're finally finished setting this up, it's three in the morning and Eastwood's going to do this scene in a single take. The camera begins to move, yet again, nobody yells "action" and it's very quiet. I begin to announce one of the soldier's names and I screw it up! I didn't even say a name, it was just a noise. The crowd audibly gasps and looks at me like it was a scene from *THE PRODUCERS*. I was petrified, thinking that Mr. Eastwood knows I screwed up the 3 a.m. shot. So I very slowly turn around and Eastwood is looking down on me from the camera dolly and he says, "Don't worry. We're going to use the front of you anyway." So he kind of saved my butt.

**SC: [laughs] That was nice of him!**

Polito: I do remember his kindness. In between shots on the set, I remember he sat down at a piano and he just started playing jazz. It was amazing to watch him calmly linking the ivories as thousands of people were running around him. He is like the Coens in that he knows what he wants and it's always a first take with him.

**SC: You probably have some happy memories from your time on the set of *THE FRESHMAN* (1990).**

Polito: I got to work with Marlon Brando! That was an interesting thing. While I was waiting to audition for the role, Morgana King — who played Brando's wife in the *GODFATHER* movies — was there in the waiting room. I said, "I can't believe you're here!" and she said, "I don't want to be here! Bud" — she called Brando Bud — "wants me here. I don't want to be in this movie. I don't have the time." And I said, "You got to tell me what it was like with Brando." And she said, "He was a fan of my singing and he knew I cooked vegetarian. He would always come to my house for Sunday meals. Sometimes I had to make him meals and send it to him. It was always about my food and that's why he wanted me in *GODFATHER*." She ended up not doing the film, but I always thought that was kind of cute.

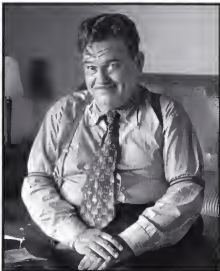
My first scene with Brando was my last scene in the movie. In the first take, I come bursting through the door and say, "Put your hands up. We're the Fish and Wildlife Administration." Brando grins Matthew Broderick and says, "Put the fucking gun down or I'll fucking kill ya." I'm fucking blow your fucking brains out, fucking, fucking fuck!" and we continued filming this scene. There was a quiet moment after the take and [director] Andy Bergman says, "Marlon, we're doing a PG movie here. You can't say fucking this and fucking that." Then Brando says, "[performs a Brando impression] 'Yknow, I just want with the moment. Jot, you didn't mind, did ya?' This was like a gift from God. I actually got to say, 'Just go with your impulses, Marlon.'"

It was a wonderful group that worked on that film. I also got to work with B.D. Wong and Maximilian Schell, who I was such a fan of. Maximilian told me he was there because he was friends with Brando since *THE YOUNG LIONS*. It was a great experience being around these guys.

**SC: What was it like working with Ridley Scott on *AMERICAN GANGSTER* (2007)?**

Polito: That was wonderful. I was very intimidated, of course. I didn't know why I was in the film. But

[Ridley Scott] had seen the explosion scene from the opening of *MILLER'S CROSSING*. When I first got on the set, they brought me to him and he pulled me aside and said, "I was in *Coney Island* and I saw these old goombas and one of these guys had his hair combed in a pompadour even though he had about ten strands of hair. So, I'm just letting you know that that's the look we have in mind for you." And that's all he sort of said to me.



Polito in *THE MAN WHO WASN'T THERE*

When I did the confrontation scene with Denzel Washington, Scott gave me absolutely no direction, apart from the fact that I had a small cup of coffee and the cash for the drugs that I pass over and Scott just let me play around with these props a little bit. There wasn't much direction there, but much like Eastwood, you felt that everything moved smoothly. To me, Scott was like a lion. He's quiet, he's calm and you just tell there was so much power around him.

**SC: Tell me about your experiences on the set of *THE SINGING DETECTIVE* (2003).**

Polito: Ah! Now that I loved! I didn't know the series, but I knew many people who praised it beyond belief. Mel Gibson — God love him, I don't care what anyone says about him — produced and appeared in this movie for his friend Robert Downey Jr. It was supposed to be Robert Downey Jr.'s big comeback. That's why people stick around Mel Gibson, because he really has done a lot of good. Mel paid for Downey Jr.'s insurance on the film and about three-quarters through the shoot, Gibson gave him a motorcycle.

I remember sitting with Downey, because I wanted to talk about something I stole directly from him. Years before he was in a movie called *SOAPDISH*. In the film, Downey Jr. spends the entire movie obsessing over his attraction to Cathy Moriarty's character. There's a wonderful moment where it's revealed that Cathy Moriarty's character is really a man who changed. Downey Jr. is sitting with his boss and has to quietly stand up and swallow the fact that he's actually obsessed with this man. And when he does, he twists his hand in such a way that it looks like all

of the tension that he was feeling was in that trigon' twisted hand. I thought it was a hysterical gesture and I said, "I'm going to steal that motherfucking gesture, by hook or by crook."

So when I did *BARTON FINK*, I made sure that my hand was always the only reference to whatever tension I was feeling at the moment. When I told Downey Jr. all of this, he was sitting in his trailer, shirtless, looking like a young baby and he was so generous in that conversation. It was a completely joyful experience.

**SC: How did you wind up on *SEINFELD*?**

Polito: Here's the story with *SEINFELD*, because everybody wanted to be on *SEINFELD*. I got a call on a Friday, telling me that they wanted me to come in for a reading on Saturday. So they sent me the script and in the hallway scene with Kramer, I'm supposed to say, "What are you doing?" But I had a very old fax machine and it printed the script out in such a way that it read, "What are doing?" So I said, "What are doing?" I might have an accent! I started to do this thing with a very generic Eastern European accent. When I see myself saying the lines, I say, "Wait a minute, if I'm going to do it with an Eastern European accent, I've got this stringy hair piece that the Coens built for me in *BARTON FINK*. Now I'm beginning to build the character. I walk in a little late on Saturday morning and they're about to start the auditions, so I turn to one of the actors there and I say, "What accent are you going to use?" And he says, "What do you mean, accent?" I say, "You want to use an accent because it says, 'what are doing?'" And the guy shows me his page and says, "No, it doesn't! It says 'What are YOU doing?'" And I said, "Oh, my God! I based this whole thing on a misprint." At this point I got called in to be the first to audition, which is the death position. Nobody wants to read first. I walk into the office in a stupor and I say to Jerry Seinfeld and Larry David, "I got a misprint on this thing and I'm doing an accent with a hairpiece and, —" And Jerry goes, "Calm down, calm down. Let's try the accent." And I start to read. And I got the part. That is the weirdest character I've ever played.

**SC: Here's something I've always wondered.**

**How much of your performance on *SEINFELD* was improvised? It has a very loose, improvisatory energy behind it. I've also heard that in *CRITICAL CONDITION* (1987) you were kind of inadvertently forced to improvise a scene with Richard Pryor.**

Polito: Well, first of all, let's talk about *CRITICAL CONDITION*. I truly felt — and I may be wrong — that Pryor may not have been able to read. I'm not sure. Whether he was able to read or unable to read, he certainly didn't want to play the scene as written and it was one of the funniest scenes I've ever read. When that happened, I just went along with it. I just kept to my lines because I wasn't going to improvise my dialogue.

Not one word is improvised in *SEINFELD*. The scene at the end of the *SEINFELD* episode when I say, "He is a fancy boy. Love me, want me," all of that was written for that scene. They all loved the crazy stuff I was doing with my mouth so they added that to the first scene in the hallway with Michael Richards. It wasn't improvised in the second scene, but it was included in the scene where it hadn't been in the initial writing. The key, of course, to acting is to always make it look like it was improvised. Let me just tell you about Jeff Bridges in *THE BIG LEBOWSKI*, every one of

those "ahs," "duhs" and all of those halting sounds were on the page. The Coens write actual, magical, musical dialogue.

**SC: What can you tell us about BLANKMAN?**

Polito: I love BLANKMAN! I was a real fan of Damon Wayans. He was amazing. I did have a bit

did not open well in London, so the producers ran scared, even though we had Simon Pegg and David Schwimmer in the cast. As fate would have it, I'm still waiting to be discovered.

**SC: Well, I'm a fan, if that means anything.**

Polito: Well, of course it does, Mr. Sullivan.



Jon Polito as "Minelli" in BLANKMAN

of a problem when I was on the set the first day, because I didn't know he was going to play his character so child-like. It was a bit weird for me. I was expecting the character to be more like a typical superhero and it kind of threw me off.

But the big problem with BLANKMAN was that my character killed off Wayans' grandmother in the film and the grandmother was played by Lynne Thigpen, who at that time was on this kids show called WHERE IN THE WORLD IS CARMEN SANDIEGO? For awhile after that movie came out, children would approach me in public, yell "Mommy, it's Minelli," and cry. I never really had an affect like that on children before, but then I never killed off a precious, Disney-like character and you don't want to be responsible for that. But I had a wonderful time doing it and I loved working with Damon and Chris Lawford. The main thing I enjoyed about it was the moment I rise out of the floor of the bank and say that classic gay line, "Anybody can rob a bank, but it takes a real man to do it in satin!" I'm very proud of that line.

**SC: I love your character from BIG NOTHING (2006), and the fact that he's this creepy little nerd who's more dangerous than he looks.**

Polito: Oh, I love that one. BIG NOTHING is great. I hadn't gotten the chance on film to repeat the BARTON FINK character. For an actor like myself, there are certain characters you put into your repertoire that you can pull out as your base for how you're going to audition and how you're going to perform. You don't play the character the same way, but you got a base to stand on. When I was over in Europe shooting BIG NOTHING, I asked the director [Jean-Baptiste Andrea] if I could use a pair of glasses that really magnified my eyes. As soon as I put them on I immediately went into the nasal voice that I used in BARTON FINK. Nobody saw BIG NOTHING, but I'm very proud of that film. I did it back to back — actually cross-crossed in filming — with a movie called STIFFS (2010), with Danny Aielo. Physically, I was the same but I had to completely change the characters in between the shoot. That was a great gift and I thought if these two films come out at the same time, I'm finally going to get some recognition. But STIFFS was never released and BIG NOTHING

**SC: I read this on your IMDb page and don't know if this is true or not, but were you up for the role of Captain Spaulding in HOUSE OF 1000 CORPSES?**

Polito: I don't know what that means, to tell you the truth... Somebody wrote that on my page, but I don't know what that means. What is that?

**SC: It was a horror movie that Rob Zombie directed.**

Polito: Oh, I love that guy. He's crazy.

**SC: So the role wasn't offered to you, then?**

Polito: Maybe they were considering me for the role, but I didn't hear about it. Here's the thing: I've accepted everything that was offered to me in my life. I'm a total whore. I have no standards. I do everything.

**SC: Well, incidentally, I would have loved to have seen you in the role because I think you would have brought a lot to the character.**

Polito: Who played it?

**SC: Sid Haig.**

Polito: I'm sorry. I don't know who that is. Is he great?

**SC: He's good. He's mostly done work for Roger Corman and Jack Hill in the '60s and '70s.**

Polito: I don't know. You sound like you know a lot about this stuff. You are a nerd.

**SC: [laughs] I know. I'm not proud of it.**

Polito: Look at it this way, you're an artist in your own right.

**SC: Well, I don't know about that [laughs], but thank you. Now, you say you do anything, but what I like about you is that you commit to those roles. You don't just show up to grab your paycheck. You fully commit.**

Polito: Absolutely, absolutely. I was offered the role of Orren Boyle in ATLAS SHRUGGED: PART 1 (2011) and I was very excited to be working. Even though I didn't share the political beliefs of the subject matter. But anyway — if you want this to be an honest article, I will be honest with you and here's the story — when I went to rehearse with Michael Lerner, who I have known since BARTON FINK, he basically said, "With these kinds of movies, I don't even know the lines. I'll get it together before we go on." He didn't treat it like it was an important role. Now granted, Michael's been an Oscar nominee. But his attitude was that it was beneath him and I've never felt that. Somebody out there is doing a lot of work to get this thing together and I've treated every one of my roles as if it were a Coen Brothers' film.

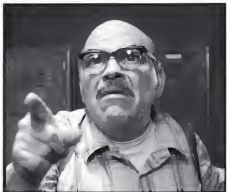
**SC: You play gangsters a lot. Is that a role that, privately, you kind of sigh and role your eyes whenever it's offered to you. Is that something you're, maybe, a little tired of playing?**

Polito: That doesn't really happen to me. As I said before, I believe that actors have a repertoire and you can just pull out those specific characters. But you only want to redo them if there's some reason to reinvestigate them. And that's what I've been fortunate enough to have for the most part. I did GANGSTER SQUAD (2013) because I got to play an old, tired gangster and have a wonderful scene with Sean Penn. Sure, it was familiar territory, but there's something special about these similar roles. Besides, what do we old character guys have out there anyway besides cops and crooks?

**SC: Speaking of GANGSTER SQUAD, I know you're not the type to answer your critics, but what inspired you to respond to A.O. Scott's review of GANGSTER SQUAD?**

Polito: Y'know it's a funny thing, I saw the film on opening night with an audience of regular theatergoers and those people went crazy. They were jumping up and down and cheering. I hadn't seen a reaction like this in years. It was a blast to watch.

After that, I was reading the reviews and one review in particular seemed familiar to me. So I went back and read the New York Times review of MILLER'S CROSSING and — I thought — it was basically the same review. They didn't like Albert Finney, they didn't understand Gabriel Byrne, they thought the Coens were off the mark, they basically didn't think the movie was good. So I figured, just for the fun of it, I'm going to react to A.O. Scott's review. I didn't expect it to go viral on The Huffington Post, but it wasn't a negative thing. I wasn't angry. I just thought it was funny



Jon Polito in BIG NOTHING

that his review was so similar to the New York Times' review of MILLER'S CROSSING, which is now considered a classic. You don't normally comment on those things but I felt very close to [director] Rubeen Fleischer and I enjoyed making the film. Why not defend it? Granted, it wasn't the artistic thing that MILLER'S CROSSING was but, to me, it was a wink and a nod to the old Warner Bros. gangster films.

**SC: Here's something I'm very curious about: FLODDER IN AMERIKA (1992)? How did you get involved in this Dutch comedy?**

Polito: Dick Maas, the director, had made a comedy called FLODDER, which was about a low-class, white-trash family who had moved into a

Beverly Hills-style neighborhood FLODDER was such a big hit in Holland, and I believe, East Germany that Maas was able to build a studio around the film's profits. About five years later, in order to replenish the pot, Maas was going to do a movie about the Flodder family coming to America. Around this time, I got a call from my agent who tells me I'm being offered a part in a European film called FLODDER IN AMERIKA. I was cast as the owner of the strip club who was being beaten up in Central Park — it was never quite clear what I was doing in Central Park in the first place — and then befriended by The Flodders.

We actually shot my scene in Central Park — which was really frightening — and all of the interiors were done in Amsterdam. After we finished the film, they brought me back for the opening, which was so big they literally closed down Amsterdam. Nobody had to work that day, there was a parade, and they made cookies called Flodder cookies that they threw out to the people. It was like a major political situation going on. There were thousands of people in the streets waiting to see the Flodders drive by.

**SC: That's amazing!**

Polito: The situation was really interesting to me because half of the stuff was being done in Dutch. We actually did two versions of the movie: one all in English and one in Dutch and English.

**SC: What happened to the English version?**

Polito: The English version was not a success and I don't think it opened here because nobody was familiar with the first Flodder movie to begin with.



Danny DeVito and Jon Polito in  
**IT'S ALWAYS SUNNY IN PHILADELPHIA**

Maas was a terrific guy to work with. Unfortunately, about four years ago I found out that Maas lost control of his studio and he was no longer flying back and forth to the States to try to make movies. It was a sad situation, because I really liked working with Maas and I was hoping he'd have a crossover career.

**SC: Have you done other movies that were unreleased in America?**

Polito: There was something called THE CHILDREN'S WAR (1985), which I did in Budapest, Hungary very early on. It was also one of the first films done by Kyrá Sedgwick when she was just about 21. It had a pretty good cast and I'm not even sure if it's listed on IMDb. It was kind of a dis-

aster. It was based on the memoirs of a man who claimed he was one of the children who had hid in the sewers in the Jewish ghetto and had fought back against the Nazis. It was not released because it eventually came out that the man's story was a lie. He never even lived in the ghetto, he was just cashing in on this wonderful story.

**SC: So it wasn't released at all?**

Polito: Never released, as far as I know.

**SC: While we're on the subject of foreign filmmaking, tell me about your experiences with Hyung-rae Shim on THE LAST GODFATHER (2010).**

Polito: He had a very interesting history, because he was a popular television star in Korea and he created this character named Young-goo. The character was made up of stolen slapstick routines from silent era comedians like Buster Keaton and Charlie Chaplin. However Hyung-rae Shim made a lot of money from this Young-goo character, so he opened a studio, went on to produce a movie about dragons [DRAGON WARS: D-WAR], made even more money and the studio got even bigger. At this point, he hadn't played his Young-goo character for 18 years and people kept asking him when he was going to play Young-goo again. So he decided to make a movie about Young-goo coming to America to reconnect with his long-lost gangster father.

Initially, I didn't know what his schtick was because I never saw his man perform, but I accepted the role and I was very happy to be a part of it because I found out I was going to be working with Harvey Keitel and I've always been such a fan of his work. [CONTINUED ON PG. 47]

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# DVDementia

Based on true events — a pair of sisters who murdered numerous young women in Mexico — the sordid, south of the border sleazefest **THE DEVIL'S SISTERS** (Bellhoo/Film Artists) was long considered a lost film, until director William Greife (**DEATH CURSE OF TARTU**) located a well-preserved print in Germany. Unfortunately, it was missing the film's final eight minutes. Disappointing? Sure, but since this is the only print to surface since 1968, you have to cut 'em a little slack. In addition, it's one of Greife's most delightfully deranged efforts... Told in flashbacks, as abused Theresa (Sharon Saxon) recounts her shocking story to the cops, we see how this small town sanatoria answered a newspaper advert for a big city housemaid job, only to become the latest unwilling addition to a Tijuana prostitution slaving run by Carmen (Vela Martinez) and Rita (Antia Crystal) Alvarado. After being raped by brutish thugs until her will is crushed, she's locked in a bedroom and forced to pleasure their clientele. This is depressing stuff, particularly for 1966, but that's only the beginning! Because she eventually ends up in a barn-turned-prison filled with women — most of them pregnant, thus useless to the Alvarados — who're beaten, starved, forced to dig their own graves, and for punishment, bound naked with barbed wire to the "royal marriage bed." Alas, 80 minutes in, just as we're ready for some night-ous comeuppance, the chase climax abruptly cuts off, with present-day Greife describing the missing scenes, accompanied by photos and new storyboard images. Some of the male supporting parts lack subtlety, but the female castmates seem legitimately haggard and Martinez's Carmen is hellishly evil. Julio Chavez's shadowy black-and-white cinematography suits the gritty material, with Davis, Florida posing as Mexico for this 10-day production. It's a wonderfully sleazy discovery, complete with a relentless cruelty that wouldn't fit in perfectly with the roughest *Guerra* fare of that era. The DVD includes a commentary, intro and interview featurette with Greife, plus an essay by TEMPLE OF SCHLOCK's Chris Poggali.



Combining the retro-campiness of vintage X-rated fare with classic monster movie tropes, 1974's Vancouver-lensed **SEXCULA** (Impulse) is a rare example of Canadian hardcore cinema. The sex scenes are fairly tame and it's a scattershot mess, but there's plenty of corny jokes, continuity snafus, unkempt hair, and assorted strangeness to keep viewers amused. In the film's framing device, a young woman finds her grandmother's old journal, chronicling the 19th-century sexpades of Transylvanian Countess Sexcula. As she reads this diary (in the nude, of course) it's hurried by her boyfriend (screenwriter David F. Hurry), our flashbacks begin, with mad scientist babe Dr. Fellingsstein (Jamie Orlando) encountering a problem with her pony-tailed laboratory creation Frank. He doesn't seem to dig the opposite sex, so the Doc calls in her naughty niece to help jump-

start his libido. Enter Sexcula (Debbie Collins) in her black vampiric cape, who tries everything to lure up floored Frank — hypnotism, sharing a bathtub and ultimately gathering fresh "sex cells" by blowing every guy in town. Subplots involve a naked chick stretched out on a table, who's supposedly a sex-robot; a horny, hairy-assed hunchback named Ouncie; plus a tryst between a stripper and a (laughably cheap-ass) gorilla. Like a lot of early porn actresses, what Collins lacks in looks (imagine a severely weather-beaten Melanie Griffith), she makes up for with in-the-sack energy. Unfortunately, the film goes tediously off the rails with its 20-minute wedding-turned-orgy sequence, which looks more like rough footage from an entirely different wank-flick.

**SEXCULA** displays a likeably raw, "Hey, guys! Let's make a dirty movie... eh?" enthusiasm, and director John Holbrook (going incognito for this gig, as "Bob Hollowich") later shot second unit footage for such British Columbia-based films as **FIRST BLOOD** and **FREDDY GOT FINGERED**. The disc includes a seriously discolored trailer. With its unique spin on the "old friends share a rowdy, drunken, comic misadventure" milieu, director Dome Karukoski's **LAPLAND ODYSSEY** (Napapiirin Sankarit) (Artsploitation) became Finland's #1 box-office hit in 2010. But unlike similarly-themed US productions, this relies less on cheap sex gags than its sad-sack characters and severely depressing undercurrent. Irresponsible, unemployed slacker Janne (Jussi Vatanen) can't seem to do anything right, with his exasperated wife Inari (Pamela Töle) finally laying down the law. Buy a Digibox [digital converter] for their television by tomorrow morning or she's moving out. Simple, right? Alas, Janne spent the money she gave him on beers with his pals. So how can he earn enough to get on a Friday night in Iceland? Thus begins Janne's

200 kilometer road-trip through dark, icy, rural Lapland with two deadbeat friends, Tapio and Kapu, a car "borrowed" from one of their moms and lots of beer. Idiotic detours and misguided decisions litter their journey — encountering Inari's wealthy, dickhead ex-boyfriend; renting their car out as a taxi; a pitstop with ski resort lesbians; a spectacular auto accident; reindeer mayhem; plenty of eccentric strangers. Creamed with dumb but essentially good-hearted guys (who tend to get into trouble within minutes of walking into any room), gorgeously frigid visuals and a dark sense of humor (which Karukoski makes apparent in the opening minutes, during a montage of "swing tree"

suicides), **ODYSSEY** uncovers a wealth of humor in being broke, freezing, desperate, and incredibly stupid. The DVD includes 2011's **BURUNGO**, an offbeat 14-minute short by Karukoski and LAPLAND-female-head Töle. Set in a poverty-stricken Nairobi slum, young Josephine naively decides to sell her 10-year-old sister Virginie for sex(!) in order to purchase a new dress for their mother's upcoming job interview. It's a potentially grim vignette, told with sweetness and compassion. Arriving 15 years after the release of the original **ZULU**, director Douglas Hickox's 1979 **ZULU DAWN** (Severin) wasn't the rousing war epic that fans had expected, but instead a savage indictment of colonialism and military stupidity, resulting in the death of 1,500 British troops during the 1879 South African battle of Isandlwana. This time around, the British Empire gets their ass handed to them. Once again chronicling the conflict between a small, well-armed group of white colonialists versus an overwhelming number of Zulu natives, the build-up to battle is seen from both sides — British officers and aristocrats having garden parties and issuing ultimatums, with tribesmen refusing to comply. Soon the boneheaded Brits declare war and invade Zulu territory (since a bunch of spear-carrying "heathens" are obviously no threat against modern rifles), with their strategic screw-ups and disregard for human life ending in the British forces being massacred in overwhelming numbers. Meanwhile, the overstuffed cast includes top-billed Burt Lancaster (as steadfast Colonel Durnford) and Peter O'Toole (as the epitome of pigheaded arrogance, Lord Chelmsford), plus a roster of excellent UK actors — Nigel Davenport, Denholm Elliott, John Mills, Simon Ward, a pre-LONG GOOD FRIDAY Bob Hoskins, Ronald Lacey as a skeptical journalist, and **QUADRAPHENIA**'s Phil Daniels nervously preparing to become cannon fodder. Gorgeously shot by Iraqi cinematographer Ousama Rawi, the characters are finely drawn, but the script is less interested in individual human drama than detailing one of the most catastrophic fiascos in modern military history. Underrated when first released (the film didn't even premiere in New York City until 1982), its message of wartime hubris is more relevant than ever today. Featurettes include round-outtakes, a history of the Zulu Wars with historian Ian Knight, a battlefield visit, plus the film's historical advisor, Midge Carter, dishes amusing dirt about O'Toole's extreme intoxication and how the driving forces behind the massive, skillfully-staged battle scenes were actually assistant directors David Tomblin (who earlier produced TV's **THE PRISONER**) and Peter MacDonald (RAMBO III).



Based on Aleksei Konstantinovich Tolstoy's 19th-century Russian novella, "The Family of the Yvordaiak" (earlier adapted for a segment of **Bava's BLACK SABBATH**), **THE NIGHT OF THE DEVILS** (La Notte Dei Diavoli) (Rare Video) is a deliciously eerie Italian-Spanish production in which a stranded outsider gets a horrific, first-hand

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taste of an old rural legend. After a trippy opening sequence sprinkled with gratuitous nudity and gore, an amnesiac (spaghetti western vet Gianni Garko) is found wandering the countryside and a bed is booked for him at the local mental hospital. The man, identified as Nicola, seems unnaturally terrified of the dark and freaks out when he meets

a woman from his past. What made him such a traumatized basketcase? In flashbacks we see how, after wrecking his car in the woods, Nicola was invited by a farming family to stay the night. They're an odd, unfriendly lot though — whispering about some sort of curse, locking themselves

securely into their home the moment it gets dark and fearful of an evil witch they've repeatedly tried to kill. Unfortunately, those who fail become infected and transform into pale, red-eyed, undead "Voudaisks" (conventionally known as vampires) who thirst for human blood. The only bright spot in his stay is Sdenka (Agostina Belli), the sultriest farm girl in all of Italy, who promptly bonbons into Nicola's bed. One of the final features from director Giorgio Ferroni (*MILL OF THE STONE WOMEN*), it's stunningly shot and thick with atmospheric menace. Although the set-up is a little on the slow side, Ferroni artfully draws the viewer into his sinister saga, complete with goody decomposing heads (gotta love Carlos Rambaldi's old-school practical effects), wooden-staked hearts, creepy possessed children, plus a chillingly tragic conclusion. The Blu-ray includes a half-hour interview with composer Giorgio Gastini.

Most low-budget DIY monster movies tend to rely on cheap gore or gratuitous sex, but director/co-writer Charles Roxburgh's ingratiating creature feature satire, **DON'T LET THE RIVERBEAST GET YOU!** (Brain Damage Films) — the latest effort from the creators of *FREAKY FARLEY* and *MONSTERS, MARRIAGE AND MANCHVEGAS* — instead offers redemption, romance, eccentric humor, a cheap-ass beast costume, plus a squeaky-clean, oddly-timeless veneer that resembles a Larry Buchanan-directed episode of *THE ANDY GRIFFITH SHOW*. Disgraced Neil (co-writer/producer Matt Farley) returns to River Town, USA for a family wedding, but the poor guy is still a local laughing stock due to his past tirade regarding a creature called the Riverbeast.

Once his town's finest tutor, Neil accepts a job teaching recently-expelled Allie (Sharon Scallion), who shares his inquisitive streak. When the pair aren't trying to dig up proof of the Riverbeast's existence, Neil hopes to win back ex-fiancée Emaline (Elizabeth Peterson), who's currently engaged to a dockhead. Of course, we viewers know that this Riverbeast is real, since we've seen it (complete with a big of steam running down its back) wandering about the woods; unfortunately, guess who becomes a prime suspect when townsfolk are murdered? The script is littered with absurd con-

versations (such as the merry uses of kitty litter, or a wild new dance called "popping"), oddball characters — from muckraking local reporter Sparky Watts, to a famous big game hunter hired by Neil — and even squeezes in a musical interlude when local legends *The River Mud Warriors* reunite! Plus it's hard to consider this Riverbeast a genuine threat since it only tends to slaughter the town's biggest assholes. The performances might range from goofily inspired to "Er, don't quit your day job," but it's all kept afloat by the production's small-town charm and boundless ingenuity. The DVD includes a cast and crew commentary.

The 2008 feature debut from French writer-director Olivier Chateau, **ASYLUM** (a.k.a. *I WANT TO BE A GANGSTER* (Synapse), takes some bold twists as it follows a wannabe gangster through a bloody, seductive, stylish, and occasionally surreal comedy of errors. Jack (Julien Courbey) has always dreamt of being an honest-to-goodness gangster, and as this film begins, he's pulling off scams on other low-lives. But this time around, he's stolen from the wrong guy, with a cache of dope belonging to one of the city's top Mafia — so only the beginning of Jack's voyage into the most twisted niches of the criminal underworld.

Although Jack turns out to be more cunning than you might initially expect, one teeny, gun-related screw-up soon lands the poor schmuck in a world of shit, by severely pissing off "Le Grand Patron" (*The Big Boss*) (a cameo by WEEKEND's Jean-Pierre Kallou). His punishment? Jack is chained to a tree in a remote forest and left to die like some kind of animal — and we're not even halfway into the film! Determined to find some way out of this dire predicament, days soon turn into weeks, with Jack making rambling confessionals into a found video camera, having the occasional strange encounter, and becoming increasingly crazed from hunger, thirst, paranoia, and his own nightmares. Chateau wrings a good deal of suspense out of this seemingly modest situation, lacing it with stylish directorial touches and a brutal comic edge — practical-jokester hitmen, bizarre stand-offs, unlucky coincidences, right down to its remarkably futile finale — while the film's gramy, washed-out cinematography adds grit to this unpredictable story. The disc includes a making-of featurette, plus Chateau's 2003 short film *HOMER*, the comically-destructive misadventures of a psychotic pet rabbit while his human owner is out of town.

2013 isn't even half over yet and filmmaker Dustin Mills already has a pair of micro-budgeted horror-comedies under his belt! For the last few years, synthetic drugs known as "bath salts" have kept the bargain-basement media stocked with stories of zombie-like behavior, savage violence and even cannibalism. I'm surprised it took so long for an enterprising filmmaker to exploit the concept: I'm even more surprised at the amount of ridiculous fun unleashed by **BATH SALT ZOMBIES** (MVDvisual), courtesy of director/editor/cinematographer Mills (who also co-wrote the script with producer Clint Weiler). Brandon Sakil stars as New York City bath salt junkie Richie, but after just a few puffs of an insanely-potent new strain, he's tripping out and peeing a woman's feces clean off. This dude is instantly hooked and seriously fucked! The real culprits are bath salt pusher

Bubbles (Ethan Holey) and his chemist buddy (once again, Dustin Mills), who've used a military chemical weapon in their latest batch of the shit, transforming Richie and his friends into twitching, grinning, super-strong killers responsible for a nightclub massacre. Meanwhile, Josh Eal plays Agent Forster, a lawman so mecho that he singlehandedly annihilates the city's most notorious bath salt gang, and is now tackling these recent murders.

In addition to the low-rent gore, gratuitous nudity, pathetically dumb-ass characters, and pounding punk soundtrack, Mills concocts some outrageous throw-aways (e.g. a drug-transformed corpse), genuinely impressive sequences (kudos for that S.W.A.T.-team slaughter finale!), as well as ingenious ways to stretch his tight budget (like having his star, Sakil, also play all of the conveniently-masked S.W.A.T. and gang members). Still, a few stock shots of NYC can't hide the fact that nothing else even remotely looks like it was shot there. Its 70 demented minutes of top-notch schlock, and the DVD includes a commentary with Mills and Sakil.

Next up is writer-director Dustin Mills' **NIGHT OF THE TENTACLES** (MVDvisual), a riotous mix of cut-rate monster shenanigans, skewed laughs, plus the ultimate meet-cute premise — boy likes girl; boy jacks off to girl while eavesdropping on the sounds of her masturbating; boy and girl fall for each other, despite his blood-soaked Faustian pact. Brandon Sakil once again takes the lead role as Dave, a gawky digital artist who specializes in "fantasy erotica" and is smitten with pregnant, unweaned, downstairs neighbor Esther (Nicole Gerity). Following a surprise heart attack, Dave is visited by the Devil (a cheapie beastie with four glowing eyes), who offers him a deal that's hard to pass up. All of Dave's heart problems will be eliminated, but in exchange he must care for a voracious "heart" that resides inside a small wooden chest, speaks to him and requires human meat to survive! Luckily, Dave has a lot of asshole neighbors — one of



who even threatened to kill his cute little dog — and in the finest *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS* tradition, begins rounding up its meals. Eventually the demands made by this tentacle monstrosity become too great though, with Dave spiraling into drunken despair. Mills keeps the energy high, the weirdness non-stop, its gory laughs tempered with moments of dread, and his budget low by setting most of it inside this one apartment. Sakil gives the type of wildly overwrought performance that makes Crispin Glover look sedate, but grounds his character in true emotional turmoil, with Mills popping up as his horny landlord. Although the film unleashes some seriously dodgy digital-FX during the creature rampage, it's refreshing to find DIY horror fare that's genuinely inventive and unpredictable, instead of the usual interchangeable drek. The DVD has a director's commentary.



Undoubtedly one of the roughest entries in Nikkatsu's Roman Porno line, director Kôkyû Ohara took a respite from the usual sex, fetishes and rape we've come to expect from their kinky productions, in favor of sado-masochism and the abuse of power for 1977's **FAIRY IN A CAGE (Impulse)**. Set during the World War II era, unscrupulous Judge Murayama (Minoru Okochi) uses political influence to satisfy his darkest desires, by having the military — who routinely torture anti-Emperor dissidents in their private jail — arrest pretty women on trumped-up charges, so the judge can get his kicks watching them being punished (a hobby that he considers 'noble'). His latest target is Kimiko (Naomi Tani), a jeweler's young wife, who's falsely accused of funding an anti-war protester and hauled out of her home in the middle of the night, with our judge supervising her highly-unorthodox 'interrogation.' Kimiko is stripped, hung by her ankles and tickled with a feather, plus there's genital torture and a humiliating urination gag, as Murayama and his equally kinky colleagues revel in her suffering. Amidst Kimiko's torment, there's also Taoka, a moral young soldier who eventually realizes



that he's following the orders of an unconscionable sadist, plus an imprisoned kabuki star taken advantage of sexually by Murayama's crazy mistress. Tani makes an all-too-convinced victim, and this is one incredibly grim, 71-minute dirge, with even the slightest glimmer of hope quashed within minutes. Still, it certainly gives S&M fans plenty to enjoy, even as Ohara subversively paints Japan's high-ranking military and judiciary as abusive pervers, with corruption endemic throughout the system. It's a beautiful widescreen transfer and the lone extra is an essay by Jasper Sharp.

Packed with simplistic, anti-drug claptrap, **420 TRIPLE FEATURE: Vol. 2 CONTACT HIGH (Apprehensive)** contains three early, marijuana-demonizing films, but comes up short in terms of the high camp laughs that baked videos require. It begins with 1951's **THE TERRIBLE TRUTH**, a 10-minute portrait of a teenager's road to ruin. After reading fake newspaper headlines about teen drug addiction, L.A. Juvenile Court Judge William E. McKesson visits the Howard Family, whose daughter Phyllis — once a happy, up-permed high school senior — is newly released from a narcotics ward. Grilled by McKesson, we learn how her friends smoked pot ("that's jive talk for marijuana") and she succumbed to peer pressure (since grass makes "everything speed up to 100 miles per hour"). Only minutes after meeting drug 'peddler' Chuck (who wears a suit and tie while dealing to kids on busy street corners), weak-willed Phyllis was shooting up heroin and quickly became a straggly-haired, desperate-for-a fix junkie. Hilariously idiotic, it's shot in color but lacks sync-sound, with narration provided by "Phyllis" and (future Los Angeles County District Attorney) McKesson. Best of all, it ultimately blames the godforsaken Commies (!) for promoting drugs in America, in order to undermine our national morale!... Next up, a high schooler goes undercover in director Ray Teet's 1942, poverty-row **DEVIL'S HARVEST**. It begins well, with an innocent-looking hot dog stand across from a school selling joints hidden inside their buns, but it's all downhill from there. Good girl Kay O'Farrell

(June Doyle) is invited to dance at a ntzy shindig, but when marijuana leads to a female partygoer's death, the police ask Kay to help take down the town's weed-pushing mobsters by getting a show-girl job at the crooks' nightclub. This kid has moxie to spare, but the film devolves into a dull, sub-standard crime tale. No surprise, it was the first and only acting gig for the entire cast. Originally clocking in at 52 minutes, this particular print was crudely hacked to a half-hour — trimming tedious gangster subplots and Kay's parents — but it's all so lousy that the shorter, the better... Finally, 1949's **THE DEVIL'S WEED** bounced around the exploitation circuit for a decade under such alternate titles as **WILD WEED** and **SHE SHOULD SAID NO**, but boasts decent production values, legit actors and lots of overwrought drama. Naive Anne Lester (Lila Leeds, who was arrested for marijuana possession a year earlier with Robert Mitchum) is seduced into blazing up a joint by a marijane-pushing romeo. One puff can't hurt, right? But 30 seconds later, she's glassy-eyed and addicted! Amidst the usual weed freak-out scenes — from physical violence to a silly Hollywood Bowl fantasy — Anne helps her beau sell grass at private gatherings (imagine a stoner's version of a Tupperware party), until she's hauled in by the head of the LAPD's Narcotic Division (Lyle Talbot), with his scare tactics convincing her to turn rat. Directed by B-movie legend Sam Newfield, it's sprinkled with unintentional laughs, along with 28-year-old Jack Elam as a henchman.

Kenji Mizumi directed **THE TALE OF ZATO-ICHI** and the first four **LOVE WOLF** AND **CUB** outings, but he's never gotten the respect he deserved. His final feature, 1974's chambera epic **THE LAST SAMURAI** [Okami Yo Rakujitsu O Kire] (Neptune Media), might not be his finest work, but it often feels like one of his most personal. Spanning 14 years of tumultuous civil warfare during the 19th-century, the script weaves intimate drama, bursts of action and an impressive scope, but at 158 minutes, also gets quite long-winded. Takahashi Hidenori stars as Sugi Tosenosuke, a contemplative samurai torn between two battling factions — the Tokugawa Shogunate, who's ruled for over 200 years, and Loyalists to the Emperor. Returning



to his old home, Sugi saves one woman from being beaten for gambling debts and another after her traveling companion is murdered (using his katana skills to slaughter a dozen soldiers), but also has some major decisions to make about his own future. Meanwhile, Ogata Ken is Nakamura Hanjirô, a feisty bad-ass who kills any man in his way, takes any woman he desires, crosses paths with Sugi, and supports restoring Imperial rule to Japan. In the film's second half, these men take very different paths, with Sugi refining and marrying, while Nakamura rises within the Emperor's ranks. But when Sugi's wife is attacked by

Imperials, you can imagine just how dangerous a pissed-off, vengeful ex-samurai can be (especially if you're the guy who's getting his head chopping clean in half). Don't expect non-stop swordplay though, because the sweeping story is primarily about two men adjusting to this new world, with its final showdown over a senseless murder far more thoughtful than cathartic. The real stand-out here is Ogata, whose compelling character outshines our unsuitable protagonist, and it's no surprise Ogata soon went onto acclaimed fare like Shôhei Imamura's **VENGEANCE** IS MINE and Paul Schrader's **MISHIMA**. Bonus materials include a trailer, stills and an essay by Tom Mes.

It may begin like just another home-made, dead-end slasher romp, but **DROPPING EVIL (Wild Eye)** is far from typical — eventually morphing into some kind of disjointed, quasi-religious sci-fi conspiracy. And while director Adam Profftor gets points for tacking heady, over-elaborate ideas on a micro-budget, he also messes by a mile! When Mike and Samantha embark on a camping weekend, they invite lonely "loser" Becky, in hopes of setting her up with a wimpy, innocently-religious guy named Nancy (Zachary Lint). A fairly standard horror set-up, right? That is, until we learn that a high-tech corporation has secretly installed cameras inside Becky's eyeballs and are surveilling this roadtrip, amidst talk about potential warfare and dumb-gods. What? Meanwhile, in hopes of shutting up Nancy's incessant prattling about the evils of pre-marital sex, beer and rock music, they dose this Jesus freak with L.S.D.! Bad move, because Nancy is soon tripping his ass off, murdering every one and referring to himself as "the arm of god." Confused? It gets weirder, kids, because assassins are soon dispatched, we get an axe-thrrowing showdown, a gun grows from a guy's forehead, and there's cryptic talk about "divine" children with extraordinary powers. As for its top-billed "stars":



Armin Shimerman (STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE) is the boss of this mysterious corporation, ValYouCorp; Tiffany Shepis shows up briefly as sultry goddess Dionysia; plus TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE's Edwina Neal is spotted on TV as the President. And what about Fred Williamson's Commander Death Mould? "The Hammer" only appears for one lousy minute in a forced attraction at the film's end, and, offering a few guys in silly costumes! Only 75 minutes long yet excruciatingly over-padded, the flick is a technical nightmare, the acting is amateurish, the script is unfathomable, and your first reaction will be "What the fuck was that?" The disc includes a ValYouCorp commercial, deleted scenes, plus a trio of "sequel" featurettes that include additional footage of Shepis, Williamson and Shimerman. In the 16-minute **DADDY-O DIED SO LOVE COULD LIVE**, God has gone missing, death is no more, and a living dead chick must choose between her lesbian lover or Death Blood's zombie army. **THE RISE OF GUNHEAD** spends 20 minutes on Nancy's conspiracy-nut brother Zachenah, relationship problems between Mike and Sam's decapitated head, and Mike developing his organic-weaponry skills... Finally, in the 19-minute **BECKY'S THE BOSS**, Becky reawakens in captivity, discovers her own powers and rises to ValYouCorp's executive heights, along with a surreal musical interlude.

Having little in common except for their pursuit of cheap thrills, this low-rent exploitation duet from **Apprehensive Films** gives you two films for the price of one, plus all of the ragged splices, emulsion scratches and jump reel changes you'd get in an old 42nd Street grindhouse... With writer-director Joe DiMaggio at the helm, it's no surprise to learn that 1976's **BLACK COBRA WOMAN** is a siphoned trainwreck, with **BLACK EMANUELLE**'s Laure Gemser playing exotic nightclub performer Eva, in Hong Kong with her dancing-topless-were-a-not-at-all-phallic-snake-wrapped-around-her act. Wealthy Judas (Jack Palance) keeps a collection of venomous snakes at his swanky pad, instantly falls for kindred spirit Eva and becomes her sugar daddy — soon she's living at his place, driving flashy cars, accepting expensive gifts, and jealously watched by Judas' brother Jules (Gemser's husband and frequent co-star, Gabriele Tinti), leading to manipulation, murder and an outrageously vengeful climax that would've had Deuce patrons going fucking nuts [spoiler: it's a snake shoved up the ass!]. Ever wonder why Palance was so ecstatic when he won his CITY SLICKERS Oscar? Because he wouldn't have to appear in shit like this ever again! At least it was a change from Jack's typical tough guy roles, and he plays Judas with a goofy energy. Meanwhile, the "script" finds any excuse for Indonesian-born Gemser to doff her clothes — a



nude massage parlor, long showers, some lesbian dalliance — but she lacks any visible enthusiasm. Insufferably dull, astoundingly stupid and altogether typical DiMaggio slop... It's paired with director Massimo Dallamano's 1973 Eurocrime thriller **SUPERBITCH** [a.k.a. **Mafia Junction**], which offers more excitement, superior production values and a convoluted, country-hopping plot full of double crosses. Swarthy Ivan Rassimov stars as Cliff, a US narcotics agent who's gone deep undercover in hopes of taking down two competing crime families — Morelli's London escort/torture biz and a Beirut-based drug cartel run by vicious Mamma the Turk (Palencia Hayes, who'd later play A FISH CALLED WANDA's elderly dog owner) — while Stephanie Beacham is Joanne, Cliff's girlfriend and one of Morelli's top escorts [Note: the brief scenes of nude Beacham are hotter than all of Gemser's combined bare flesh in **BLACK COBRA**]. The plot is punctuated by bloodshed, such as Morelli's henchmen posing as cops and massacring Mamma's goons, but once the vicious old broad and her sociopathic 'children' hit town, the stakes are raised. Joanne is rudely snatched off the street, while Cliff concocts a trap that'll reel in both gangs and benefit himself financially, with the filmmakers heading to Brooklyn and into Manhattan for a massive heroin shipment and climactic shoot-out. Though no classic, it's a fast-paced romp with a sty sense of humor.

The latest true crime portrait from filmmaker John Borowski (H.H. HOLMES, ALBERT FISH) chronicles the twisted tale of a renowned mass-murderer, cold-blooded psychopath and old-timey son-of-a-bitch in **CARL PANZRAM: THE SPIRIT OF HATRED AND VENGEANCE** (Waterfront Productions; panzram.com), with the 80-minute film mixing dramatic recreations, talking-head insights and passages from his jailhouse writings

(read by John DiMaggio, the voice of FUTURAMA's Bender). When Panzram was arrested in 1928 and confessed to numerous murders, young prison guard Henry Lesser smuggled him paper and a pencil, convincing Carl to write his life story, which spans being institutionalized and sexually abused as a child; becoming a homeless, crank loner with a self-confessed fondness for "whisky and sodomy"; a stint in the Army; hopping from one godawful prison to the next; along with jailbreaks, burglaries, assaults, rapes, and murders. Even at his own execution, Panzram couldn't help being a dickhead! Sprinkled throughout are various experts — a criminologist, a former police detective, the head of San



Diego State University's Special Collection (where Panzram's papers are stored), a whiny human rights activist, artist Joe Coleman, even recollections of Panzram penned by fellow inmate Robert Stroud (the Birdman of Alcatraz!) — while the most intriguing clips are from a videotaped 1979 interview with an aged Lesser. The film bogs down during its analysis of Carl's anti-social behavior (blaming his upbringing and inhumane prisons), but Panzram's story is so regrettably compelling that it transcends its rapid time-store psychology or the production's budget limitations. The DVD includes a making-of featurette (with DiMaggio's outtakes providing much-needed laughs), deleted scenes, plus the complete 45-minute Lesser interview.

**BEST THOUGHTS** [doronmaxhagy.blogspot.com] (2012). So why exactly does this film — a 50-minute indie by director/producer/co-writer/actor Doron Max Haggy — warrant its own special section? Because it doesn't technically fit into the parameters of "DVDementia," since my screener arrived on good of fashioned VHS, with its packaging cleverly designed to resemble a book that's a pivotal prop in the story. Andrea Finlayson stars as Andrea, an unsettled young woman who's not the most outgoing person and has trouble making friends; that is, until she meets Michael (co-scripter Michael Newton), who assists a "famous" writer, travels around the country for seminars and is deeply into "philosophical" stuff (uh, oh, Andrea, run!). On their first lunch date, he pressures her to read his mentor's self-help hardcover, "Perfect Thoughts," and as we follow Andrea through her dull daily routine, workplace conversations, shopping, plus following the book's various vapid steps (e.g.

'believing turns into achieving') — she becomes increasingly hooked on unnaturally-platonic "boyfriend" Michael and this equally creepy book. The everyday narrative takes a strange twist when she discovers a weird lump growing under her armpit.



is highly concerned and all of her acquaintances say it's incredibly gross. Is it a cyst? Cancer? Something unknown? As she struggles to discover herself, Andrea's body seems to be in revolt. Avoiding any overt horror, the script takes a more suggestive route, with air-around naturalistic performances (though Andrea seems so unthreatened that it's hard to believe she could hold down a job or fend for herself). Haggy's mix of social and sexual anxieties, along with an intimate, almost voyeuristic style keeps our interest piqued throughout, even if its intentions are left purposefully (and a bit disappointingly) vague. It's basically what you'd imagine an episode of GIRLS, directed by David Cronenberg, might resemble.

#### BARBARA BOUCHET Cont. from PAGE 8

"What am I going to say to him?" [laughs] "Well, you can see if there's a part for you. You might go back to work, and it would be perfect for you."

So I called my girlfriend, who was a casting director, and said, "Shelia? This is Barb. Is there anything of interest in that film?" She said, "You know, it's mainly *Cameron Diaz*. There isn't much in it except one other part. But it's a small one: Mrs. Schermerhorn." I said, "Shelia, I don't give a shit. I want it." So I went in, did my screen test, and everything was fine. "Okay, you're in," Shelia said.

And I'll never forget the first day I was on the set. Marty [Scorsese] came up to me and said, "Miss Bouchet, thank you very much for accepting your part in this picture. I've seen a lot of your

films." "You've seen my films?" I said to him. "Yes," he said. "Unfortunately, there isn't much dialogue in your part." "For you, I'd even go without any dialogue." And it was great.

#### SC: What's your next project?

Bouchet: Well, my first project involved films and television. My second project concerned health, beauty, and exercise. And now I'm onto my third project: wine. I'm going back home to study to become a sommelier, and then my goal is to prepare tours for Americans in Italy's wine country.

SC: Well, best of luck to you with that project. Before signing off, do you have any favorite Barbara Bouchet movies?

Bouchet: There was one film I did that's never mentioned: VALERIA INTERDITO E FUORI [Valeria inside and Outside] (1972). And I play the lead character Valeria. I loved doing that part. I played a crazy lady in a nuthouse. It was at the beginning of my European films, and I always say, "If I followed through on that kind of movie, my career might have been totally different. But I wasn't able to wait for my next job to be that specific type of a drama. When an actor, you never know how long your money is going to last until your next film. So you always have to keep working. That's more or less what it's like." ☺

Thanks to: Eddie Brandt's Saturday Matinee Video [ebstv.com]

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SC 42. 56. Q&A's with Bo Hopkins, Alex Cord, William Katt, Gary Lockwood, Marki Bey. Reviews include *The Hash Tree*, *One of Those Things*, *Gran Bolito*, *The Wednesday Children*.

SC 41. 56. Interviews with Nancy Allen, Michael Beck, Burton Gilliam, Judy Pace, Larry Yust. Reviews: *80 Steps to Jonah*, *Adam at Six a.m.*, *Victims*, *Lifen*, *Snow Job*, *Mr. Ricco*, *Washed!*

SC 40. 56. Q&A's with Clint Walker, Louise Moritz, Aubrey Morris, James McEachin, Roger Ward. Reviews include *The Secret Night Caller*, *High School Narc*, *Stars of the Hollywood Disco*.

SC 39. 56. Q&A's with Luke Askew, Nigel Davenport, Marlene Clark, Michael Schultz, and Paul Lewis. Reviews include *The Hydrontide*, *Osser 57*, *Gine*, *Old Faithful*, *God is On the Other Side*.

SC 38. 56. Interviews with Jim Kelly, Ed Lauter, Jack Betts, Gordon Heaster. Reviews include *Satan Hates You*, *For Pete's Sake!*, *The Corridor People*, *Silento*, *Taxandria*, *Bathory*, *Brainwash*.

SC 37. 56. Q&A's with Dick Anthony Williams, Francine York, Jorge Rivero, James Hampton. Reviews: *Get High on Yourself*, *Rome 78*, *Daddy's Boys*, *Mary's Incredible Dream*, *Manimal Enemies*.

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SC 34. 56. Q&A's with Bo Svenson, Lee Ving, Barry Primus, Gus Trionis, Isela Vega. Reviews: *Mongo's Back in Town*, *The Stick*, *The Long Island Four*, *The Tenth Level*, *Act of the Heart*.

SC 33. 56. Q&A's with Michael Ironside, Austin Pendleton, Belinda Balaski, and Arthur Marks. Reviews: *Where It's At*, *The Buttercup Chain*, *Les Creatures*, *Sixteen*, *Deathwatch*, *The Challenge*.

SC 32. 56. Interviews with Ronny Cox, Tim Thompson, Enrico Colaninno, Steve Carver, Bud Smith. Reviews: *The Red Light Bandit*, *Hard to Be a God*, *The Pleasure Girls*, *Hot Enough for June*.

SC 31. 56. Interviews with Ron Perlman, Robert Forster, Gary Sherman, and Paul Maslansky. Reviews include *Blackeyes*, *The Magic Toyshop*, *The Deadly Art of Survival*, *The Day of the Wolves*.

SC 30. 56. Q&A's with William Forsythe, Gregg Henry, Per Oscarson, Matt Cimber, Anthony M. Lanza. Reviews: *Murder a la Mod*, *A Cry in the Night*, *Between Time and Timbuktu*, *Onesh East*.

SC 29. 56. Interviews with Powers Boothe, John Flynn, Andrew Prine, Hal Barwood & Matthew Robbins, Greydon Clark. Reviews: *Hell Drivers*, *18M*, *Best of Joe Pyne*, *Jim Hanson's The Cube*.

SC 28. 56. Q&A's with Clint Howard, Sig Shore, Shinya Tsukamoto, Richard & Donald Rubinstein, Bob Minor. Reviews include *Night Flowers*, *Innocent Bystanders*, *High*, *Winter of the Witch*.

SC 27. 56. Interviews with Bill Duke, Jon Finch, Sean S. Cunningham, Ken Russell, Vic Diaz. Reviews include *Plot on 42nd St.*, *Alternative 3*, *The Naked Ape*, *Evening Primrose*, *Sal Madrid*.

SC 26. 56. Interviews with William Atherton, Eric Bogosian, William Sanderson, Joe Cortese, Eddie Romero. Reviews: *Brute Corps*, *Puppet on a Chain*, *Change of Mind*, *Wild Seed*, *Poor Devil*.

SC 25. 56. Q&A's with Michael Paré, Tad Raimi, Bob Clark, Rosanne Katon, Brad Doucette. Reviews: *Work is a Four Letter Word*, *Wolffpie*, *Fly Me*, *Dorothea's Revenge*, *Outrage*, *Hammerhead*.

SC 24. 56. Q&A's with Lance Henriksen, Tom Noonan, Edmund Purdom, and Irvin Kershner. Reviews include *Hot Tomorrows*, *Nothing Lasts Forever*, *Puzzle of a Downfall Child*, *The Linnet*.

SC 23. 56. Q&A's with Fred Ward, Bill McKinney, David Carradine, Igo Kantor, Milton Moritz. Reviews include *Dirty O'Neil*, *Son of Hitler*, *International Guerrillas*, *Model Shop*, *Dionysus* in '69.

SC 22. 56. Q&A's with M. Emmet Walsh, Bradford Dillman, Michael Chapman, Nick Mancuso. Reviews: *Together*, *Outback*, *Jigsaw*, *My Best Friend's Birthday*, *The Christian Lioness Shop*.

SC 21. 56. Interviews with Malcolm McDowell, Kurtwood Smith, Vilmos Zsigmond, and Oscar Williams. Reviews include *Jim the World's Greatest*, *Hochelaga*, *Leo the Last*, *Stoned*, *Slavocrase*.

SC 20. 56. Interviews with Michael Moriarty, Keith David, Joe Turkel, Lee Frost, and W.D. Richter. Reviews include *Ice*, *The Diadem* & *Mini-Killers*, *Deadhead Miles*, *Duffy*, *I Start Counting*.

SC 19. 56. Interviews with James Remar, Jared Martin, Don Gordon, Lorenzo Semple, Jr. Reviews include *Gonks Go Beat*, *Inchon*, *Is This Trip Really Necessary?*, *Deafute*, *Demon Lover Diary*.

SC 18. 56. Interviews with Victor Argo, Jesse Vint, Kimi Fukasaku. Reviews include *The Owl Service*, *Mondo Cendado*, *A Cold Wind in August*, *Kenny & Company*, *Welcome Home Soldier Boys*.

SC 17. 56. Q&A's with Paul Morrissey, Eddie Deezen, Philip D'Antoni, Carol Sped. Reviews: *Strangers in the City*, *Synanon*, *Parfait Friday*, *Pearls Before Swine*, *Your Three Minutes Are Up*.

SC 16. 56. Q&A's with Julius W. Harris, Marilyn Jol, Sid Haig, Michael Campus. Reviews include *Play It As It Lies*, *Zebra Killer*, *Ghostwatch*, *Of Freaks and Men*, *Jerry Lewis in The Jazz Singer*.

SC 15. 56. Interviews with Fred Williamson and Hugh Hays-Byrne. Reviews: *The Milky Way*, *The Legend of Nigger Charley*, *Street of Dreams*, *The Story of Menkind*, *Brother Theodore Speaks*.

**SHOCK CINEMA 14. Paul Koslo, A.C. Stephen and Hajji. SOLD OUT!**

SC 13. 56. Interviews with Don Stroud and Russ Meyer. Reviews: *Bigfoot and Witchy*, *The Slams*, *Whored Wicked*, *Punishment Perk*, *Rips Hits the Skids*, *Jag Mandir*, *Who Are You Polly Maggoo?*

SC 12. 56. Interviews with William Smith. Reviews include *The Waresell of Woodstock*, *Strawberries Need Rain*, *Cover Me Babe*, *Evil Roy Slade*, *Soul to Soul*, *The Gong Show Movie*, *Alabama's Ghost*.

SC 11. 56. Reviews include *Trans-Europ-Express*, *The Big Cube*, *The American Dreamer*, *Charlotte*, *You Are What You Eat*, *They Call Her One-Eye*.

SC 10. 56. Reviews include *The Phynx*, *Kid Blue*, *Bike Boy*, *Meinold*, *The Cool Ones*, *Dallas Doll*, *A Man Called Dagger*, *The Pusher*, *The Monitors*.

**SHOCK CINEMA 9. SOLD OUT!**

SC 8. 56. Reviews include *God's Angry Man*, *Who Killed Teddy Bear?*, *The Candy Snatchers*, *Let My Puppets Come*, *Prelude to Happiness*, *My Hustler*.

SC 7. 56. Reviews include *Beyond Love and Evil*, *Privilege*, *The Touchables*, *Cool Breeze*, *Fleming Creatures*, *Paganini*, *Son of Oraculus*, *Lions Love*.

SC 6. 56. Reviews include *Skidoo*, *Renewal Uncle Tom*, *The World's Greatest Sinner*, *Shed Life*, *The Chelsea Girls*, *Young Playthings*, *Chafed Elbows*.

**SHOCK CINEMA 1 through 5. SOLD OUT!**



# SHOCKING BOOKS

**JOE ESTEVEZ: WIPING OFF THE "SHEEN"** by Brad Paulson and Chris Watson (BearManor Media; www.bearmanormedia.com; \$14.95). If you're familiar with Joe Estevez's acting career, then you've undoubtedly watched a lot of shreer movies, since the "younger more talented brother of Martin Sheen" has appeared in over 200 films—sometimes up to a dozen a year! Essentially one long, in-depth conversation with Estevez, this 140-page softcover is often amusing, occasionally rambling, but also provides insight into Joe's prolific filmography and turbulent life. Authors Paulson and Watson make their admiration clear from the opening pages, as they gush about Estevez's friendliness, talent and professionalism, and though referring to Joe as "the biggest name in the world of independent cinema" might be debatable, the guy has undoubtedly enjoyed some wild times. Topics range from his longtime friends, recent

writing, a brief stab at directing, as well as film gigs that he considers his best and others he's still annoyed about. We get anecdotes about being drunk in the Philippines, while doubling for Martin on APOCALYPSE NOW; getting eddy out of LUCKY LADY; and pissing away early opportunities due to his alcohol consumption. Estevez is also a man of strong opinions—dismissing Tarantino, or calling RAGING BULL "pornography"—but also isn't afraid to point out when he's been a jerk in the past or delve deep into his personal philosophy. Joe's resume might scrape the bottom of the barrel, but his humility and sense of humor oozes through every page of this fascinating volume.

**FINAL CUTS: The Last Films of 50 Great Directors** by Nat Segaloff (BearManor Media; www.bearmanormedia.com; \$24.95). Nat Segaloff's eclectic show biz career—film producer, journalist, playwright, author—goes back to the '70s and he certainly knows his cinematic history, as proven by this terrific, 355-page softcover focusing on the final films of a wide array of directors. Primarily centered around US filmmakers, it consists of 50 essays (49 men, including Hollywood legends like D.W. Griffith, George Cukor, Frank Capra, and Preston Sturges, and only one woman, Dorothy Arzner), each profiling a different notable director, with a brief but celebratory career highlights and ending with a more in-depth history and analysis of their last feature. On rare occasions, these final films turned out to be gems (Orson Welles' F FOR FAKE), others were fascinating failures (Arthur Penn's loopy PENN & TELLER GET KILLED, William Wyler's racially-charged THE LIBERATION OF L.B. JONES) or forgettable fluff (Robert Wise's urban dance flick ROOFDROPS), as well as some "What the hell were they thinking?" projects like Don Siegel's Bette Midler comedy JINXED or focus-group-fucked fare such as James Bridges' BRIGHT LIGHTS, BIG CITY and John Frankenheimer's REINDEER GAMES. The fact that a lot of these final films were unwatchable duds from one-time greats (Billy Wilder's BUDDY BUDDY, Blake Edwards' SON OF THE PINK PANTHER, Vincente Minnelli's A MATTER OF TIME) makes the book a little depressing at times though. It's all a bit scattershot, but the

intriguing premise and Segaloff's thorough research makes it a solid read for cinema buffs.

**REGIONAL HORROR FILMS, 1958-1990: A State-By-State Guide With Interviews** by Brian Albright (McFarland; www.mcfarlandpub.com; \$45.00). For decades, independent films produced far outside of Hollywood's city limits were the mainstays of the drive-in and 2nd-tier theatre circuit. The results weren't always successful or even vaguely watchable, but they certainly provided more cheap thrills than stodgy Timeslot fare. This, the first volume of its kind, catalogs a little over three decades of these regional horror/sci-fi endeavors—from early indie outings to the shot-on-video explosion of the '80s—with author Brian Albright painstakingly researching the low-budget monsters and madmen that emerged from every area of the US. The first half of this 335-page softcover contains 13 lengthy interviews with several seminal indie filmmakers, who take us through financing, filming and final distribution of their uniquely home-made efforts. They include folks such as Floridian William Grefé (DEATH CURSE OF TARTU), New York's Ed Adlum, INVASION OF THE BLOOD FARMERS), Texan Larry Stouffer (HORROR HIGH), Louisiana's Albert J. Salzer (NIGHT OF THE STRANGER), Robert Burrill on his California community outing THE MILITAS MONSTER, plus I particularly enjoyed Albright's talks with directors of two underrated cult gems, Milton Moses Ginsberg (THE WERE-WOLVES OF WASHINGTON) and Lewis Jackson (CHRISTMAS EVIL). The remaining portion of the book is an A-Z, state-by-state cataloging of regional releases, along with a brief cast/crew listing and info on each film—everything from THE HORROR OF PARTY BEACH and DON'T LOOK IN THE BASEMENT, to BLACK DEED DOLL FROM HELL and STREET TRASH. Highly recommended!



## JON POLITO Continued from PAGE 41

Hyung-rae Shim and I worked really well together. Although he didn't speak English, I understood what he wanted through his physical indications. I didn't need to listen to the translation. It was "me Tarzan, you Jane" and I enjoyed it!

It didn't turn out to be any way successful. In fact, Hyung-rae Shim has been brought up on charges and put in jail in Korea because they did not like what happened with the film and what happened with the money. It's got a very sad ending.

## SC: How did you wind up playing Danny DeVito's brother on IT'S ALWAYS SUNNY IN PHILADELPHIA?

Polito: One guy on the Internet just hates me. He follows me everywhere and calls me a "fake-ass Danny DeVito." But anyway, let me tell you something about Danny DeVito. When I was doing OTHER PEOPLE'S MONEY, I told the writer that Danny DeVito should do this film. He said, "Woooo, nooo, no." I said, "Danny DeVito is the only guy who could be almost repulsive but charming."

So anyway, I always wanted to work with Danny DeVito and I started watching IT'S ALWAYS SUNNY IN PHILADELPHIA because I'm from Philly originally. I thought those guys were insane and I loved them. So I went to my agent and said, "Look, I know you're not thinking of me for this, but I would like to be on IT'S ALWAYS

SUNNY IN PHILADELPHIA. So they sent me a script and I read for it and I end up getting the part. Unfortunately, I wind up getting pneumonia and I wasn't able to appear on that episode. They're assuming, though I didn't take it because it was too small of a role but that wasn't the reason. They eventually wrote me the part as Danny's brother which, to me, was a gift from the Gods. I finally got to work with Danny DeVito, who I think is a comic genius. So that little prick who says I'm a fake-ass Danny DeVito can say I'm a fake-ass Danny DeVito who played his brother.

## SC: What I loved the most about that episode are those bad, unconvincing wigs you and DeVito are sporting.

Polito: What do you mean bad wigs? I thought I looked gorgeous.

## SC: [laughs] Sure. Fair enough. Tell me about your appearance on the "Haeckel's Tale" episode of MASTERS OF HORROR (2008).

Polito: I knew John [McNaughton] ever since he directed me in an episode of HOMICIDE: LIFE ON THE STREET. I loved John. I got a call from McNaughton [in the raspy voice of John McNaughton], "Jon! I'm doing this goddamned piece of crap up in Vancouver, and I want you to play this character who's a necromancer. You bring people back from the dead. It's real sick."

"You're going to love it."

I had never gotten the chance to do one of those old Boris Karloff-type performances. I was able to do all of this heavy, schlocky acting and I am very proud of that performance. It's unlike anything I've ever done. I love that stuff. That's what I was raised on.

## SC: You don't do too many horror movies, do you?

Polito: They don't ask me! I really want that stuff. I was raised on monsters, horror. My brother used to make dinosaur movies for God's sake. The reason I did ROCK MONSTER (2008) for the Sci-Fi network was because I always wanted to say, "It's coming! It's coming!" I love vampires, I love werewolves, I love all of it. That's the stuff I live for. Put me in make-up, darling. Give me some high heels and some fangs and I'm there.

## SC: Well, you were in C.H.U.D. (1984). That was a horror movie.

Polito: Yeah. But I didn't get to do anything. I just played a newsman in a hair piece I want to run around and get torn apart. Maybe when I get older I'll get to play that old curmudgeonly guy who's hiding the monster in the barn. We'll see. Hopefully when this article comes out, it might influence a director out there to shove me in the jaws of some monster. ☺

STUART WHITMAN *Cont. from PAGE 15*

So I was at the Beverly Hills Hotel, knew that Nancy Kwan was there, and wanted to see her and talk to her. And as I was waiting for her to come down the elevator, Howard Koch and the guy who produced it... who was it?... a fat guy [note: Joseph E. Levine]... they come out of the elevator together... And I'd just read an article that very day which said that George Peppard had bolted from the location of this movie and left everybody stranded. And when Howard Koch [Joseph Levine] came out of that elevator, Howard introduced me to [Levine], and I said to them, "Listen, you got a whole movie crew out there in Africa... I'm right for the role Jesus, let me have it!" So they kind of laughed it off. "Oh... Ho, ho, ho... No, no, no..." Kinda like that. Well, when I got

home, I got a call from Howard Koch, "Pack your bags," he said. "You're going to Africa."

## SC: SANDS OF THE KALAHARI looked like a very tough shoot.

Whitman: Oh shit, that was tough. It was 117 degrees in the shade — and there was almost no shade. Also, you can't train baboons. God almighty. And they had 'em chained, and they were yanking on themselves, with the chains cutting their skin — and I had to work with these guys. There was no animal control in Africa, either. [laughs] Oh, that was a tough film. I can see why [Peppard] left. But Stanley Baker and I became fast friends. And Theodore Bikel, an opera singer, we became good friends too. The whole cast was fantastic.

Steve Kiefer: The ending is great, what with the baboons tearing you apart and all. Whitman: [laughs] It was released two ways. I don't know which version you saw.

Kiefer: When you collapsed, the baboons fell upon you, and the movie was over. So what happened? Did you take on the baboons in the other version?

Whitman: Yeah.

Kiefer: They didn't tear you apart?

Whitman: No, I became king of the baboons. [laughs] ♪

Special thanks to Steve Kiefer and Eddie Brandt's Saturday Matinee Video [sbmvideo.com]

SHIRLEY KNIGHT *Cont. from PAGE 35*

Other times, you do things because someone asks you to. Adam Sandler asked me to do a film for him called GRANDMA'S BOY (2006), which is ridiculous that I'm in that. The first person that ever told me that I was funny was Harold Ramis. He cast me in STUART SAVES HIS FAMILY, where he put me in a fat suit, and people thought that I was funny. It really made me so happy that people thought I was funny. Then I did AS GOOD

AS IT GETS and then PAUL BLART: MALL COP with Adam Sandler and Kevin James, and they put me in a fat suit again... [laughs] So I guess I'm a comedian now. [laughs] I love it.

The funniest thing to me now is that I can walk down the street and high school or college kids will stop me and tell me how much they love GRANDMA'S BOY and they want me to take pictures with them. [laughs] Who needs serious acting when people think you're funny? [laughs]

SC: Two more questions... First, what is one thing that no one knows about Shirley Knight? Knight: I can sing.

SC: From 1959's FIVE GATES TO HELL to the upcoming Stephen King film MERCY, what has Shirley Knight learned as an actress from then 'til now?

Knight: To accept myself and to appreciate myself. That's an important thing for everyone to do. ♪

## MAGS, ZINES AND SMALL-PRESS PUBLICATIONS

CINEMA SEWER #26 (#320-440 E. 5th Ave, Vancouver, BC V5T 1N5 Canada; \$4.00 + \$2.50 postage; four-issue sub for \$24). Robin Bougie is at it again, with another mindbogglingly enjoyable edition of his illustrated, "adults only" film-mag, featuring reviews of cult exploitation (High Kicks; Yr, The Hunter From the Future), old-school pornography (Good Girl, Bad Girl) and the downright unfathomable (Raising a Pet Girl); plus essays on the proposed Dazzler movie, Swedish director Mats Heide and a nostalgic history of Times Square's Capri Cinema. Highly recommended! [www.cinemasewer.com]

CRIMSON SCREENS #11. The newest installment of this proudly-old-school, cut-'n'-paste horror 'zine packs its 18 pages with reviews — from new releases (The Bay, Exorcism) to classic trash (The Zero Boys) — Edward's misadventures as a teenage porn-bufflegger, a chat with Slaughter Trains director Johnny Dicksie, and plenty of per-

sonal anecdotes and strong opinions [just as I like 'em]. E-mail: crimsonscreens@gmail.com [www.crimsonscreensfanzone.blogspot.com]

EXPLOITATION RETROSPECT #51 (P.O. Box 5531, Lutherville, MD 21094-5531; \$5.00 p/d). Premiering in 1966, Dan Taylor's "Journal of Junk Culture & Fringe Media" returns (after a 13-year hiatus), with a 56-page digest chock full of schlocky cinema and savvy analysis. This entertaining new issue includes pieces on Necrostar in Venice, classic Ozploitation, Bruno Mattei's The Jail, Barbara Steele horror flicks, an insightful glimpse into the porn/wrestling connection, plus DVD and zine reviews. [www.dantenet.com]

LIQUID CHEESE #34 / #35 (8123 West Margaret Lane, Franklin, NJ 07132; \$7.00, payable to Dave Kosanke). Focusing on "Movies & Music to Mangle Your Mind," the latest two dloplos of this wonderfully eclectic zine include tons of reviews

and Dave digging through his old VHS collection. #34 has a fun interview with Hollywood Book & Poster's Eric Cadden, Dave's "2012 Convention Report" (Flashback Weekend, Cinema Wasteland, etc.) and Tape Mold's Dan Krim. #35 contains a talk with Shocking Images' Mark Jason Murray, plus a trip to the hoarderish Schroeder Books & Music. Add'l info: dkosanke@aol.com

SCREAM #25 (41 Mayer Street, Wilkes Barre, PA 18702; \$7.95 + \$2.50 postage; \$32 for a 4-issue subscription). Darryl Mayesh's long-running mag fills its 72 pages with a cool array of horror/exploitation-themed articles and reviews. There's a talk with Tippi Hedren, Roger Corman recalls Monster From the Ocean Floor, Paul Bunell's The Ghastly Love of Johnny X, the retro cheap thrills of Christopher R. Mihm, director Mark Pavis, Stephen King anthologies, plus informative DVD/Blu-ray reviews. Essential reading for classic horror fans! [www.screammag.com]

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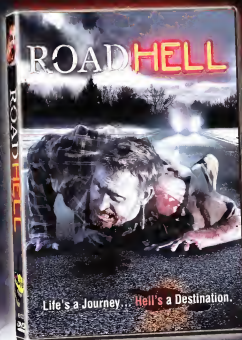
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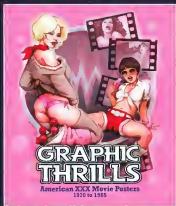


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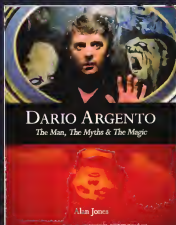
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